AFTER THE BATTLE

OPERATION AMBASSADOR
CALAIS SPITFIRE RECOVERY
THE EXECUTION OF SLOVIK

Number 32

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Edited by Winston G. Ramsey

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Front Cover: Relics at the roadside. Up till now it has still been possible to see the odd wartime relic still in situ in Belgium, like this Sherman overlooking the River Meuse just south of Hermeton-sur-Meuse near the frontier with France. Will the inauguration of the Belgium Tank Museum in Brussels in 1980 spell an end to such sights in the future?

Centre pages: An historic beach. Peter Port, Guernsey saw the landing of the first major Commando operation of the Second World War. However, instead of landing on the flat sand, because of an alteration to the plan the men came ashore at high tide — on the rocks in the foreground.

Back Cover: The restored Northrop N-3PB, recovered from an Icelandic glacier, on its unveiling at the Northrop plant, California on November 10, 1980.

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The Editor is indebted to William Kimber & Co. Limited for permission to quote from *Commando* by the late Brigadier John Durnford-Slater.

Jean Paul Pallud would like to thank Marie Anne Steiner, Robert Lohner and Gilles Ambert for their help in his research on *The Execution of Eddie Slovik*.

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As I am sure our readers will by now be aware, I always like to give every story the space in the magazine it deserves. I feel it is preferable to describe in depth even if this restricts the number of features in an issue rather than cut down on the detail and merely present a 'surface job'. Such has been the case with our Channel Islands story for which I originally started the research in 1973. We visited the four islands of Alderney, Guernsey, Jersey and Sark in April 1979 and it was soon evident that the wealth of material and the scope for telling the history of the occupation of the only part of the United Kingdom by the Germans could not be done justice even if I devoted one whole issue to the subject. Thus the reason for *The War in the Channel Islands — Then and Now*, a 256-page hardback volume which tells the full story of take-over, occupation and its aftermath *(see separate advertising leaflet)*. Separate chapters are devoted to the wartime history of each island, the post-war clear up period where so much was lost and a detailed description of the Channel Islands today and what does still remain to be seen. Further chapters cover the cemeteries (with a complete listing of all the First and Second War dead buried on the Islands), the war museums and, for the interest of visitors to the Islands, a run down on the uses to which the Germans put each hotel. All is presented in our usual style with over 650 photographs, drawings and maps, 'then and now' photographs and annotated aerial photographs taken specifically for the book; those over Sark by the special permission of the Seigneur.

Thirty pages are taken up with detailed accounts of the seven Commando raids on the Islands and I have taken the unusual step of extracting the first such raid and including it in this issue for the benefit of all our readers. I do so for one important reason: it was the first full-blooded Commando raid of the war, hurriedly put together in July 1940 within two weeks of Dunkirk and, although its success was minimal, it was the forerunner of a new form of warfare which, surprisingly, the Germans made little attempt to emulate. Here then is Operation AMBASSADOR which took place on Guernsey on the night of July 14/15, 1940.

OPERATION AMBASSADOR

HMS Scimitar, one of the two S-Class destroyers which carried the embryo Commando organisation on their first major operation of the Second World War.

According to Hilary St. George Saunders, unofficial biographer to the Commandos, credit for their conception goes to a Royal Artillery General Staff Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Clarke. In June 1940 he was Military Assistant to Field-Marshal Sir John Dill, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and, in the aftermath of the evacuation from Dunkirk, recalled, 'what other nations had done in the past when their main armies had been driven from the field and their arsenals captured by a superior enemy'. Lieutenant-Colonel Clarke later wrote on the evening of June 4 that he tried to marshal his ideas into the outline of a plan: a plan which revolved around the idea of carrying on guerilla warfare against the enemy . . . much as the Boers had done in South Africa and the Jews more recently in Palestine.

While it now seems certain that the idea of a 'Commando' force was born on Tuesday, June 4, 1940, the fact that the Prime Minister had written a memorandum on the same subject to the Chiefs-of-Staff that same day throws some doubt on the origination of the idea. It was immediately after Winston Churchill had delivered his memorable oration in Parliament on the recent traumatic events in France and the dangers which lay ahead for Britain, that he wrote as follows: 'It is of the highest consequence to keep the largest numbers of German forces all along the coasts of the countries they have conquered, and we should immediately set to work to organise raiding forces on these coasts where the populations are friendly'.

Initially referred to as 'Striking Companies', the new organisation came into being with unusual speed. While circulars were being issued to all military commands calling for names to be put forward of volunteers willing to embark on special service of an undefined but hazardous nature, the first operation was launched on June 23. That night a small force in several boats, including Lieutenant-Colonel Clarke as observer, landed in various places on the French coast in the Pas de Calais area. The ease with which the raiders had made unopposed landings was encouraging as was the subsequent morale-boosting communique issued to the general public.

By now, Sir John Dill had approved the title of 'Commando' for the new force which was to consist of ten separate Commandos of 500-odd men each. Leaving the designations of Nos. 1 and 2 for a tentative idea for special airborne commandos, No. 3 Commando was the first to be formed on July 5. Captain John Durnford-Slater, serving as adjutant for the 23rd Medium and Heavy Training Regiment at Plymouth, was selected as its CO, being instantly uplifted two ranks to Lieutenant-Colonel.

The composition of a Commando was specified as 250 ordinary ranks commanded by 247 NCOs (sub-divided into 122 lance-corporals, eighty-one corporals, forty-two sergeants and two WO2s). Officers consisted of twenty-four subalterns, ten captains (each in charge of one Troop) and one major.

Volunteers for the Commandos had to be already fully trained soldiers and inevitably there was opposition from some commanders to a unit which could take their best men and had the smell of that aversion to all regular soldiers — a private army. At the same time, some COs were only too quick to approve the release of their more troublesome types but Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford-Slater commented that, 'we never enlisted anybody who looked like the tough guy criminal type as I considered that this sort of man would be a coward in battle'. However, he was not against accepting minor offenders as the threat of being returned to their units (or RTU as it was termed) was a stabilising force and a unique form of punishment.

Commando troops received exactly the same training as normal infantry except that it was tougher and greater emphasis was put on being able to be independent and highly mobile. The only difference was that the men were not barracked but had to find their own accommodation for which they were given a daily allowance of 6s. 8d. — a small yet important facet of their training to be self-sufficient.

The HQ for No. 3 Commando was located at Plymouth and it was from the nearby harbour at Dartmouth that they sailed for their first operation on the evening of July 14.

On July 2 (two days after the occupation of Guernsey had begun), the Prime Minister sent a minute to General Lord Ismay, the head of the Military Wing of the War Cabinet Secretariat:

'If it be true that a few hundred German troops have been landed on Jersey or Guernsey by troop-carriers, plans should be studied to land secretly by night on the islands and kill or capture the invaders. This is exactly one of the exploits for which the Commandos would be suited. There ought to be no difficulty in getting all the necessary information from the inhabitants and from those evacuated.'

Accordingly, four days later, a Guernseyman was taken to the island by submarine to carry out a reconnaissance codenamed ANGER. Formerly a member of the Royal Guernsey Militia but now a Second Lieutenant in the British Army, Hubert Nicolle was taken ashore by collapsible boat by Sub-Lieutenant J. L. E. Leitch and landed on the beach at Le Jaonnet Bay on the south coast. The plan was that Second Lieutenant Nicolle would reconnoitre the proposed landing area on the north side of the island and return to the beach to be picked up two days later. His place on the island would then be taken by two other officers who were also familiar with the locality and who could then guide in the Commandos.

The switch took place on the night of July 9/10 — Second Lieutenants Philip Martel of the Hampshire Regiment and Desmond Mulholland of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry being landed in a similar fashion via submarine and boat.

Second Lieutenant Nicolle reported that there were 469 Germans on the island and that, although machine gun posts had been set up around the coast, the main body of troops were concentrated in St. Peter Port.

On the basis of this information plans for Operation AMBASSADOR were laid. After landing, forty men from H Troop, under Captain V. T. G. de Crespigny, were to create

Brigadier John Durnford-Slater, who commanded the newly-formed No. 3 Commando on Operation AMBASSADOR. After a very active war, in which he participated in operations from North Africa to the Arctic Circle, he died tragically under the Brighton Belle Express near Haywards Heath on February 5, 1972.

Photochrom Co., Ltd.] [London.

PETIT PORT.

When the tide serves, this is one of the best bathing places in the Channel Islands, though many steps must be descended.

Illustrations such as this from pre-war guide books or picture postcards aided intelligence on suitable landing places and helped to plan operations against the enemy-held coastline of Europe right up to D-Day. At low tide, the sandy beach at Petit Port would have provided an easy landfall. However, because Operation AMBASSADOR was postponed for forty-eight hours, the forty men of No. 3 Commando which comprised Landing Party No. 1 had to land on the rocks at the neck of the bay. Neither of the other two landing parties made it ashore (Ward, Lock & Company Limited).

a diversion for No. 11 Independent Company who would attack the aerodrome in the parish of Forest. The latter unit was split into two parties. The first comprising twenty men under Captain Goodwin was to land a mile or so further to the west, nearer the airfield, while the second party of sixty-eight men, commanded by Major Todd, was to come ashore at Moye Point directly south of the target.

Meanwhile at Devonport, the destroyers HMS *Scimitar* and HMS *Saladin* were waiting to transport the men and act as escort for the seven RAF rescue launches which would take the troops from the ships to their respective landing beaches. At the last minute, bad weather delayed the operation for twenty-four hours but there was no means of informing Lieutenants Martel and Mulholland on Guernsey. No sooner had this first flaw in the plan become evident than another problem befell the mission.

In his autobiography *Commando*, Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford-Slater explained what happened:

'Since we were to sail from Dartmouth, I had breakfast at the Royal Castle Hotel on the morning of the 14th. I was excited, naturally, at being on the verge of our first operation, a very secret affair of course, and it came as rather a shock when I saw my sister Helen sitting at the next table with her husband, Admiral Franklin. Helen saw me and smiled happily.

' "Hallo, John! What on earth are you doing here?"

' "We've got some troops training in the area," I said. "What are you doing?"

'She said they were down to visit their son at the Royal Naval College. I felt uneasy but tried not to appear so. Fortunately, for the strain was growing, I was called out to the foyer of the hotel a few minutes later. An officer from Combined Operations Staff had just come off the night train from London. 'He said: "Colonel, the whole plan has been changed. Jerry is too strong. He's been reinforced at some of the places where we had intended to land."

'We moved into a bedroom of the hotel and worked out a new plan on the spot. Now we were to land at Petit Port on the south side of the island, just west of the Jerbourg Peninsula and not on the north coast as originally decided. We were to sail at six o'clock that evening. Our role was still to create a diversion for the Independent Company which was to attack the airfield.

'We completed our preparations in the gymnasium of the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth. Many of the weapons had been specially brought from London, as tommy guns and Brens were in very short supply and could only be issued for actual operations. We obtained the help of some cadets from the college who thoroughly enjoyed the work of loading the magazines and helping us in general. We planned the approach with the naval commanders and started to brief the men. Before we realised it, it was a quarter to six, and we had to embark hurriedly in the destroyer. It was a lovely summer evening and as we steamed out of the harbour most of the town was out walking on the quay. I wondered what they thought of our strange-looking convoy.

'I went over the final details with my officers in the Captain's cabin of the *Scimitar* on the way across. We had been so busy all day, dealing with naval officers and obtaining and issuing our special weapons, that this was the first chance our officers had had to discuss it all together.

'Lieutenant Joe Smale's party was to establish a road block on the road leading from the Jerbourg Peninsula to the rest of the island, so that we should not be interrupted by German reinforcements. My own party were to attack a machine gun post and put the telegraph cable hut out of action. Captain de Crespigny was to attack the barracks situated on the Peninsula, and Second Lieutenant Peter Young was to guard the beach. Peter did not relish this job as he wanted more action.

' "All right," I told him, "if it's quiet, come forward and see what's going on."

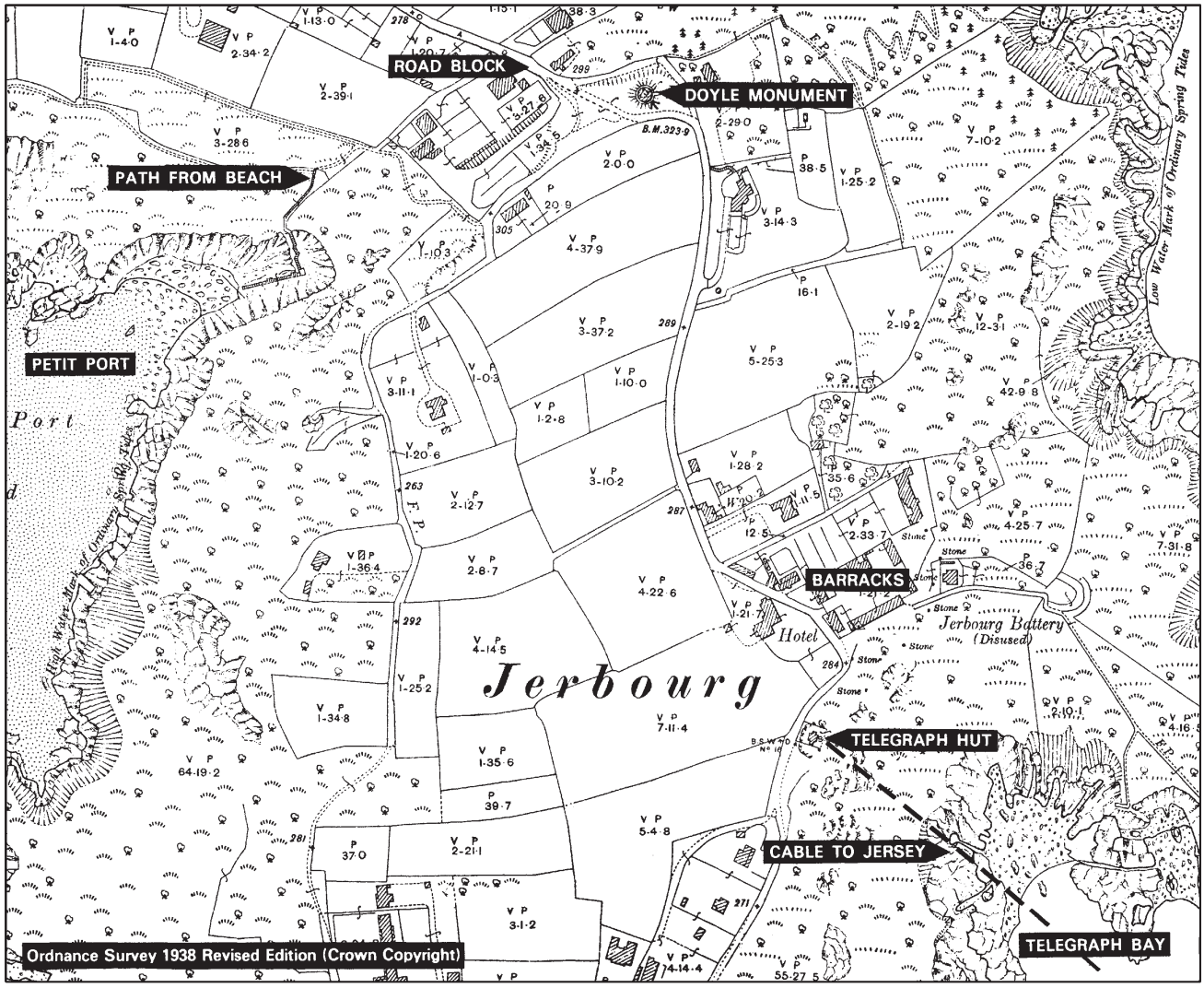
' "You chaps satisfied with the arrangements?" I asked finally. They nodded. We synchronised our watches. The password for the operation was "Desmond".'

The official report compiled after the raid then explains yet another set back: 'Permission to proceed was received by telephone at 1800. Crash boats Nos. 300 and 301 were found not in a fit condition to undertake the voyage and they had to be left behind. In the revised plan, No. 1 landing (Durnford-Slater) was left undisturbed; No. 2 landing (Captain Goodwin) was halved in size and took only No. 302 crash boat, and No. 3 landing (Major Todd) was allotted crash boats Nos. 303 and 313, the remaining men being put into the whaler of destroyer H54 *(Saladin)*.

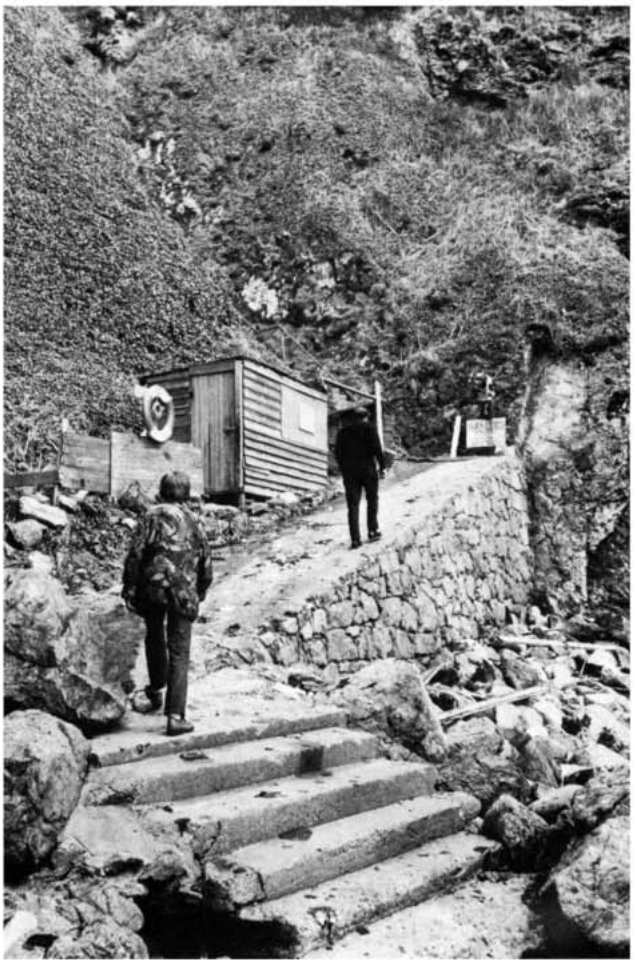
'Owing to the trouble over crash boats 300 and 301, certain stores had to be transferred to other crash boats and two of the serviceable crash boats had to make extra trips to embark the men in the destroyers. The convoy started from Dartmouth harbour at 1845 hours and proceeded to sea at the speed ordered. For some reason (possibly an extra trip to collect life belts), crash boat 313 was delayed in starting, and at about 1950 hours she was 5 or 6 miles astern of the convoy. For a time she kept at this distance, so speed of convoy was reduced to 15 knots to allow her to catch up. 313 came up well for a time and then dropped astern again, so the speed of the convoy was still further reduced to 10 knots; 313 then came into her correct position just before nightfall. Speed was then increased to 18 knots.

'Landfall was made at about the time expected and the convoy then went to within about 5 miles of the shore in order to check its positions. Visibility was poor, there was some mist and the moon was obscured. The high cliffs at the western end of the south shore of the island were easily distinguishable but it was extremely difficult to distinguish any points on the coast to the westward. Beyond the ending of the cliffs there appeared to be a number of rocky points protruding with misty

Petit Port in April 1979 with its 'stairway to heaven' still looking exactly as it was forty years ago.


ROAD BLOCK
DOYLE MONUMENT
PATH FROM BEACH
PETIT PORT
BARRACKS
TELEGRAPH HUT
CABLE TO JERSEY
TELEGRAPH BAY
Jerbourg
Jerbourg Battery
(Disused)
Hotel
Low Water Mark of Ordinary Spring Tides
Ordnance Survey 1938 Revised Edition (Crown Copyright)

VIEW LOOKING SOUTH-EAST
TELEGRAPH HUT
NEW DOYLE MONUMENT
SITE OF LATER GERMAN BATTERIE STRASSBURG
FROM BEACH



Recreating history. *Left:* **The rocky beach with the stone ramp leading to the staircase.** *Right:* **Ken Tough, Guernsey branch secretary of the Channel Islands Occupation Society, lives up to his name and sets the pace.**

spaces and low lying land in between. Destroyer H21 *(Scimitar — Editor)* and crash boats 323 and 324 broke away and passed destroyer H54 on the starboard side. (They were not seen again by H54 until Dartmouth was reached on the return journey.) Just as H21 was disappearing into the mist and slight drizzle ahead she appeared to be turning in towards the coast. When the Captain of H54 was satisfied that he had reached position Y, he stopped, the crash boats came alongside and the whaler was put into the water. The troops were then embarked in the boats, crash boat commanders were shown the points on the shore by the Captain of H54 and the boats had all left the ship by 0045 hours.'

Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford-Slater then describes what happened when they arrived off the island:

'The launches purred away from the mother ship. The naval officers in charge of the launches started off on the agreed course, watching their compasses carefully. My own eyes were on the cliffs and I was astonished to note that we were heading out to sea in the direction of Brittany. "This is no bloody good," I said to the skipper of our launch, "we're going right away from Guernsey."

'He looked up from his compass for the first time. Then he looked back and saw the cliff.

' "You're right! We are indeed. It must be this damn degaussing arrangement that's knocked the compass out of true. I ought to have had it checked."

' "Don't worry about the compass: let's head straight for the beach."

' "Right!"

'About a hundred yards from the beach a black silhouette seemed to approach from our port side. In undertones some of the men murmured, "U-boat!"

'Momentarily my heart sank. What a mug's game this was! Why hadn't I stayed at home in warmth and comfort? Then I realised that the U-boat was only a rock which bore the exact shape of a submarine superstructure.

'At that moment the launches, simultaneously and side by side, hit bottom. As they had not been designed as landing craft, they drew several feet of water. Besides, as the plan had been postponed for forty-eight hours, the tide was not half-way out. It was high. The bottom, instead of being smooth sand as had been calculated, was studded with boulders. I jumped in, armpit-deep. A wave hit me on the back of the neck and caused me to trip over a rock. All around me officers and men were scrambling for balance, falling, coming up and coughing salt water.

'I doubt if there was a dry weapon amongst us. Once on shore, we loosened the straps of our battledress to let the sea pour out. Then, with a sergeant named Knight close behind me, I set off running up the long flight of concrete steps which led to the cliff top, 250 feet up. In my eagerness I went up too fast. By the time I reached the top I was absolutely done, but Knight was even worse, gasping for breath like un untrained miler at the tape. I was exhausted myself and my sodden battle-dress seemed to weigh a ton. My legs were leaden, my lungs bursting. I could hear the squeak and squelch of wet boots as the rest of the troop followed us up from the beach. Fortunately the night was warm.

'I had an idea we were already behind schedule and I led on between a few small houses. We had to be clear of Guernsey by 3.00 a.m. As we passed each house, a dog inside began to bark. Presently there was a chorus of barking dogs behind us.

' "For God's sake, come on," I panted to Knight, who seemed to be slowing down. "We haven't got all night."

Where's Ken? Half way up and flagging — this must be Sergeant Knight!

Left: **Second wind.** *Above:* **On the flat at last.**

'By then I had my second wind and didn't feel tired again during the operation. My headquarters party was close on my heels: Lieutenant Johnny Giles, CSM Beesley, Knight, two lance-bombardiers and a sapper. Another dog began to bark.

' "Shut up!" Johnny Giles yelled at it and the barking became louder.

' "This is going to alert the whole damn island," somebody remarked ruefully.

'One of the staff officers in London had suggested sending an aeroplane to circle over our operational area with a view to deadening any noise we might make and I had accepted this idea. At this moment I saw the aircraft, an Anson, circling above us at about three hundred feet. He was plainly visible and his exhaust pipes were glowing red.

'The machine gun post, which was the first objective of my little group, was at the tip of the Jerbourg Peninsula, eight hundred yards from the landing place. I went as far as the barracks with de Crespigny. Just before going into the barracks, de Crespigny broke into a house to get information from the householder. I went in with him through the back door. However, the man we found was so terrified that he had entirely lost the power of speech; all he could do was to let out a series of shrieks. We left de Crespigny and began climbing down the cliff. I sent Beesley, Knight and the others to the cable hut. Johnny Giles and I crawled up on either side of the little mound in which the machine gun nest was dug. I carried grenades and a .45 Webley; Giles, a giant of well over six feet, had a tommy gun.

'We jumped to our feet and into the nest, a sandbagged circle. We were both ready to shoot, but I found myself face to face with Johnny's tommy gun; and he with my Webley.

' "Hell!" Johnny said bitterly, "there's no one here!"

'We went down to where the others were cutting the cables leading from the hut. Knight asked me rather plaintively:

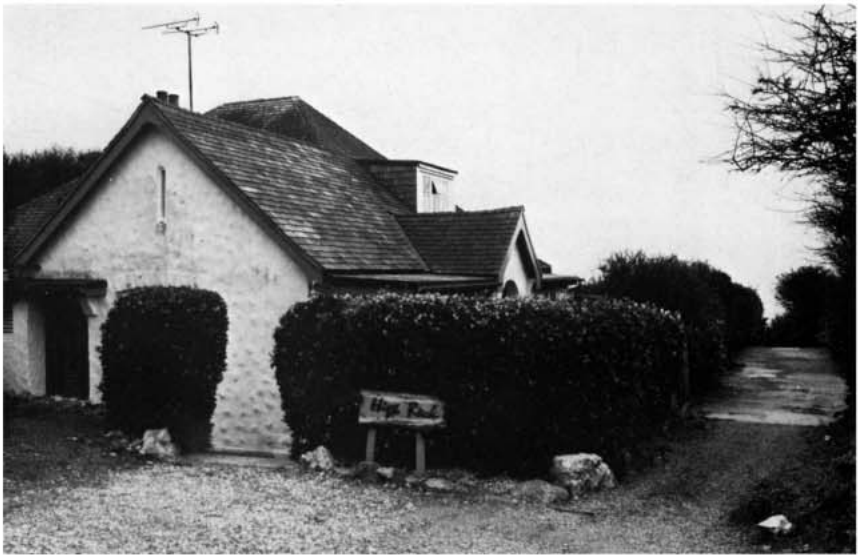
' "Please can I blow the place up, sir?" He had a pack of demolition stores on his back and was aching to use it.

' "No. Apparently the Germans don't know yet that we've come. There's no point in announcing it. Just cut the cables."

'We went back to see if we could help de Crespigny's party. It was pitch dark and, as I approached, Corporal "Curly" Gimbert burst through a hedge at me. The next thing I felt was a bayonet pushing insistenty through my tunic.

' "Password!" Gimbert hissed.

'He was a big, powerful man. It seemed a long time before I could say anything. There have been worse occasions since, when I've been less scared. At last I remembered the word and let it out with a sigh.



Looking back along the path where it passes the houses (which existed in 1940) and meets the Jerbourg road. Wot no dogs?

The derelict telegraph hut, spared the attention of Sergeant Knight and his explosives in 1940 for us to photograph nearly forty years later.

Above: This is the road block set up by the Commandos beside the Doyle Monument. It was the job of Privates Fred and Pat Drain to cut the telephone wires on the right-hand side of the road — a seemingly unusual case of two brothers participating in the same raid (Carel Toms Collection). *Below:* The Germans carried out their own brand of demolition work on the monument — see page 12. Although it was rebuilt after the war, its replacement no longer contained an internal stairway and observation platform.

The rocky foreshore which made the embarkation such a fiasco. The dinghy with the weapons (and Fred Drain) sank on the right-hand side and Fred and three other men were left behind. When we showed him this picture, it immediately brought back the memory of their later interrogation on this same beach by a German officer who stood in the centre with his back to the sea. Fred felt sure he was leaning against the large rock in the foreground during their grilling.

' "Desmond!" I said.

'Gimbert, recognising my voice, removed the bayonet quickly.

' "All right, Colonel."

'I thought he sounded disappointed.

'When we rejoined de Crespigny, his men had finished searching the barracks. There, as in the case of our machine gun nest, no one was at home. It was past time for the fireworks at the airfield between the Germans and our Independent Company. I listened. The night was still. Ignored, the dogs had stopped barking some time before. I looked at my watch and saw with surprise and some dismay that it was a quarter to three: time to go.

'We formed up on the road between the barracks and the Doyle Column, a monument we had used as a landmark. It was easy to guess from the muttered curses that the others shared my disgust at our negative performance and at the fact that we had met no Germans. George Herbert was particularly upset and begged me to give them a few minutes more to visit some houses nearby which he thought might contain Germans. In this atmosphere of complete anti-climax it was clear that none of us wanted to leave but I called the officers together.

' "We've got to be back on the beach in ten minutes," I said urgently.

'They got their men going on the run. In short order, I herded them like a sheepdog down the concrete steps. Still the enemy showed no sign that he knew of our visit.

'I was last down from the cliff top with Peter Young clattering just ahead of me. Near the bottom I accelerated and suddenly realised that my feet had lost the rhythm of the steps. I tripped and tumbled the rest of the way, head over heels. I had been carrying my cocked revolver at the ready. During the fall it went off, seeming tremendously loud and echoing against the cliffs. This, at last, brought the Germans to life. Almost at once there was a line of tracer machine gun fire from the top of the cliff on the other side of our cove. The tracers were going out to sea towards the spot where I thought our launches must be awaiting us.

' "You all right, Colonel?" It was Johnny Giles' anxious voice.

' "Yes."

'I told him to get on with forming the men up on the beach. I had landed hard on the rocks and was shaken and bruised but there was nothing seriously the matter. I never carried my pistol cocked again.

'Within five minutes my men were all formed up on the beach. I knew now that we were late for our rendezvous — it was ten past three — and that if the destroyers had obeyed instructions they were already steaming towards Britain. Then I saw the dim shapes of our launches about a hundred yards out.

' "Come in and pick us up!" I shouted.

' "Too rough! We've already been bumping on the rocks. We'll stove our bottoms in if we come any nearer."

' "Well, send your dinghy in for the weapons."

'They did. It was a tiny craft, no more than nine feet in length. With each load of weapons went two or three men. As it came in for the fifth run, a high sea picked it up and smashed it against a rock. The dinghy was a total loss and one trooper was reported drowned.

' "The rest of you will have to swim for it," I ordered.

'Fortunately we were equipped with Mae Wests and we all started to blow them up.

'Some of the men began peeling off their uniforms and wading into the sea. Three men came up to me in the darkness. I recognised Corporal Dumper of Lieutenant Smales's road-block party.

' "Could we have a word with you, please, sir?" Dumper said. He seemed a little nervous.

' "What is it?"

' "I know we should have reported this in Plymouth, sir," he said apologetically, "but the three of us are non-swimmers."

'I was ready to explode. The original letter calling for Commando volunteers had specifically mentioned that they must be able to swim. Then I calmed down.

' "I'm afraid there's nothing we can do for you except try to send a submarine to pick you up tomorrow night," I said. *(Conflicts with Private Drain's recollection — see below.)*

' "Thank you, sir," Dumper said. "Sorry to be such a nuisance."

'I removed my tunic and struck out in the water. Some of the men, with more wisdom than modesty, preferred to swim naked. I had the added handicap of sentiment. In my right hand I carried a silver cigarette case which my wife had given me; in my left a spirit flask which had been my father's. A rough sea had come up since our original landing. In these circumstances the hundred yards to the launches seemed endless. For the first fifty, breakers thundered and broke over my head. It took, I suppose, seven or eight minutes to swim out but it seemed hours and I was exhausted. As a sailor bent down from the launch to drag me aboard, the final effort of helping him, to my great annoyance, made me let go of the flask and case. When I was interested again in such matters, I noted that my wristwatch had stopped. I asked the time.

' "Half-past three," the Captain said.

' "My God! We'll have missed the destroyer completely."

'The discipline and bearing of the men during the difficult swim out to the boats was admirable. There was no shouting or panic; each man swam along quietly. The crews of the launches were continually diving in to help the most exhausted men over the last stages of their journey. Altogether, this most difficult re-embarkation was carried out quietly and efficiently.

'With dawn half an hour off, it looked as if we should have to head for home in the launches. This was not a prospect to bring delight. The crews of these boats were brave men, mostly yachtsmen with no service experience. At this point, they seemed unable to reach a decision for further action. The second launch had just broken down: ours threw it a line and had it in tow. There was a

general discussion of the situation by all hands. Even the engine attendant left his recess to chip in.

' "What the hell are we going to do now?" he demanded.

'This was too much for me.

' "For heaven's sake," I snapped, "let's stop the talking and pull out to sea."

'They did as I suggested.

'I was sure that by now the *Scimitar* had gone; a certainty shared by all aboard the launch. It now seemed doubtful that, towing the other launch, we could make it to England, even if we were lucky enough to escape German fighters which could easily nip out from airfields on the French coast. I felt that only a piece of extraordinary luck could save us.

' "May I borrow your torch?" I asked our Captain.

'He handed it to me and I flashed it out to sea, knowing that this was a despairing hope.

'To my delight, a series of answering flashes came back from just beyond the point. The *Scimitar's* Captain, I later learned, had decided to take one last sweep around for us on his way home! He was exposing himself to a tremendous risk of air attack, as daylight was only a few minutes off and the Luftwaffe had many airfields within a few minutes' flying time. Our own air cover of Hurricanes could not be expected at this time to operate so near to the coast of France.

'After blowing up the ailing launch, we transferred to the destroyer.

'Captain de Crespigny, noticing that I was shivering with cold, kindly lent me his tunic. I wore no shirt and put the tunic directly over my bare shoulders and arms. Just before getting to Dartmouth, de Crespigny said:

' "Oh, by the way, Colonel, I do hope everything will be all right."

' "What do you mean?"

' "I forgot to tell you that I've been suffering from scabies," he said.

'I rushed off for a hot bath in the Captain's bathroom. Like the operation itself, nothing came of it. My own tunic, which had my name sewn into the collar, was picked up next morning by the Germans on the beach. Durnford is a well-known name in the Channel Islands and some of the Durnfords there were harried a good deal by the Gestapo who thought that I might still be lying up in the island, harboured by namesakes.

'We arrived back in Dartmouth, safe but distinctly down in the mouth, at eight o'clock in the morning.'

While all this was taking place, the other two landings were proving even more abortive. Captain Goodwin led the second landing party away from the *Saladin* in boat No. 302 at forty minutes past midnight. Although supposedly on course for the landing beach, it seems that this boat's compass was also defective, possibly caused by weapons being stacked too close, and instead the men arrived on another island believed to be Sark. Although they retraced their course, by the time they reached the *Saladin* it was 2.25 a.m. and too late to continue with the operation.

Because of the shortage of boats to transport the main party ashore, the *Saladin's* whaler was used to augment boats 303 and 313 and was taken in tow by the latter. However, soon after leaving the destroyer, it began to leak badly and ship water. Although attempts were made to pump and bail out, the amount of water in the whaler increased and the men had to be taken off and shared between the two air-sea rescue boats, with the whaler tow being taken over by 303. With the extra load, and trying to tow a waterlogged boat, speed was minimal and, at 1.45 a.m., 303 turned back to the destroyer which was reached just over an hour and a quarter later.

Major Todd in 313 with thirty-six men on board had struggled on to try to reach the beach but by 2.00 a.m. he estimated they were still a good twenty minutes from the shore. He had also lost contact with 303 and therefore decided to abort. However, they could not even find the *Saladin* and had no alternative but to set course for England direct. Plagued by engine trouble, at first light they were met by RAF fighters which provided an escort until they reached Devonport at 10.00 a.m.

Winston Churchill, who had expected great things from his latest brainchild, was not amused when he received the report on AMBASSADOR. He sent a scathing directive to the headquarters of the embryo Combined Operations: 'Let there be no more silly fiascos like those perpetrated at Guernsey' and, as a result, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes was brought in to become the new Director of Combined Operations.

According to the official report, four men were lost in the operation (not including Lieutenants Martel and Mulholland). Gunner John McGoldrick of the Royal Artillery was simply reported as 'missing believed drowned' and Corporal Dennis Dumper, 1st East Surrey Regimental Police, and Privates Fred Drain (2nd Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment) and Andy Ross of the Black Watch as 'missing, probably prisoners-of-war'. Not until we traced Fred Drain in February 1981 were we able to piece together exactly what had happened after the launches departed. Fred, now a successful building contractor in south London, clearly remembered the night . . . and the five years of captivity which followed. It was he, not John McGoldrick, who had been in the boat with the weapons when it capsized in six feet of water and he was only saved from drowning by his brother Pat who was also a Commando on this raid.

Both the Drain brothers had joined the 2nd Battalion of the Bedfs. & Herts. before the war and had volunteered for Commando service shortly after being evacuated from Dunkirk. They were both assigned to H Troop, Special Service Troops, and received very little 'Commando' training other than a few days practice with a small boat.

It had been the brothers' task to cut the telephone wires near the Doyle Column and this had been achieved by Fred standing on Pat's shoulders to reach the step brackets on the post to climb up to the wires.

When the dinghy sank beneath Fred, Pat, a strong swimmer, said he would get him out to the boats but Fred freely admits to a fear of deep water and told his brother to go it alone.

He told us that all the Commandos had been advised that a submarine would surface off La Creux Mahie beach from midnight onwards on the following Wednesday (July 17) and that any men left behind should make their way along Guernsey's south coast to the rendezvous. Having been given additional French money on the beach by those Commandos returning to England, they were in quite good spirits and had every expectation that they too would soon be home. They had a silk handkerchief map and all had compass collar studs and magnetic needles but no arms, except for a .38 Webley & Scott which Corporal Dumper wore as part of his regular attire as a military policeman.

After the promised submarine failed to turn up to take the four men off the island, they made their way to Torteval where they called at the general store (right) owned by Mr. & Mrs. Walter Bourgaize. Here they were hidden for a couple of days, despite the fact that German troops were billeted at the house on the left at the end of the road, before they decided there was no hope of escape and that they were only putting lives in danger.

In April 1979. Walter Bourgaize was kind enough to return to his old shop (now the Torteval Shopper) to be photographed there specially for 'The War in the Channel Islands — Then and Now'.

The four men climbed the steps back to the road and began walking parallel to it but off it in case a German patrol was sighted. By doing so they came across a small wooden cabin, completely overgrown, about mid-way to La Creux Mahie. It was a sort of potting shed and had recently been used as there were tins of tangerines and some tasty cheese still inside. As this seemed an ideal place to hide up until the submarine was due, they stayed here all through Monday and Tuesday and the best part of Wednesday. To help out with food, Corporal Dumper and Gunner McGoldrick went out across the road and foraged some tomatoes.

Towards evening on the Wednesday they set out for the rendezvous, taking care to keep off the road and move through the yellow-flowering gorse. By 10.00 p.m. they were in position on the rocks on the westernmost promontory of La Creux Mahie about twenty feet from the sea. Gunner McGoldrick had dried out the torch after its ducking on the Sunday and was ready to signal out to sea with three short flashes. Midnight came and went but there was no sign of the submarine. They stayed until well after 2.00 a.m. vainlessly signalling and as their batteries faded, so did their spirits.

From that day until we spoke to Fred at his home in 1981, he had no idea why the submarine had not showed up. As the rescue arrangements for any Commandos left behind had been announced before the operation, naturally the men felt let down. We told him that the fly in the ointment had been the Naval C-in-C at Plymouth who, when he received Lieutenant-Colonel Durnford-Slater's report that men had been left behind on Guernsey, refused to back him up; the record simply stating that: 'for naval reasons the attempt to take the men off later was not possible'.

However, unaware that their fates had been sealed by a decision taken 250-miles away, dispirited, the four made their way back to the shed to work out what to do next. They decided to try to make contact with the locals who might help them get a boat. Arriving at a small village store in Pleinmont Road, they knocked on the door. This was answered by Mrs. Ada Bourgaize who was naturally surprised and not a little alarmed as a squad of Germans were billeted in the house at the end of the road. She recalls that when they said they were Tommies she immediately put them in her garden shed (although Fred Drain recalls they went into a 'back room'). Mrs. Bourgaize then telephoned her husband at work and when he returned to his house, he says the first thing the soldiers asked for was 'a fag'. They were soaking wet and while they took off their wet clothes for his wife to dry, Walter Bourgaize fetched a ladder from the engineering works next door to hide them in his attic.

The men asked if it was possible to get a boat to escape and Mr. Bourgaize said he would do what he could to find out. After lunch he went to the Imperial Hotel at Pleinmont where he knew a man who owned a boat but when questioned he said that he had no petrol for it. Mr. Bourgaize arrived home around 4.00 p.m. and gave the Commandos the disappointing news.

Corporal Dumper was of the opinion that if they could steal an aeroplane, provided he could get it off the ground, he reckoned he would be able to fly it to England. However, they more or less gave up this idea when Mr. Bourgaize said the aerodrome was heavily guarded.

There is some doubt as to the exact period they spent with the Bourgaizes, — it was either one or two days — but they decided in the end that they could not risk endangering the lives of the storekeeper and his wife any longer. The Germans were conducting house to house searches and they regularly came in the shop to make purchases (although oddly enough the store was never searched, even after they had departed).

Fred Drain remembers that they left in broad daylight one morning calmly walking up the road towards the aerodrome. He says he feels sure that although they had not spoken their thoughts to each other, they all realised the game was up and that, secretly, they wanted it all to be over. Forty years later he told us that this must have been at the back of their minds — to walk out boldly in broad daylight — rather than creep away at night when they would stand a good chance of being shot if spotted in the darkness. (This also seems borne out by the fact that, unbeknown to Fred Drain, Corporal Dumper had left all his personal possessions — a crucifix, two penknives, his watch, cigarette lighter and his stud compass together with his revolver — with the Bourgaizes.)

Before they reached the aerodrome, a German patrol picked them up and took them initially to the airfield where they were put in a room until an escort arrived to take them to the civil prison in St. Peter Port. There they were split up — Fred and Andy Ross occupying one cell with Dumper and McGoldrick (who were quite good friends) sharing another.

Next morning, under heavy guard, they were taken from the prison to Jerbourg and back to the beach where they had landed. The tide was out and a German infantry captain,

Corporal Dumper's .38 Webley & Scott, given to Mr. Bourgaize with his personal possessions, is now on display in Richard Heaume's German Occupation Museum located near the aerodrome and thus quite close to the spot where they were captured.

standing with his back to the sea, then interrogated the four men in broken English as to what had actually happened and what their individual roles had been. None of the four intended giving away any information and Fred remembers leaning against a rock idly tossing a small pebble into the air and catching it. This obviously annoyed the German for it brought a swift rebuke to: 'Put avay ze schtone!' Although his manner was harsh, they were not illtreated and the German told them they had recovered all the weapons.

They were then taken back to the prison where they spent one more night before returning to the aerodrome where a Ju 52 was waiting to fly them to Cherbourg. From there, they were taken by lorry to a huge prison at St. Lo mainly occupied by thousands of French Colonial troops although there were about fifty men there from the King's Own Scottish Borderers. The camp was located in a former French barracks on the edge of town and there they stayed in overcrowded conditions until a few days before Christmas when the entire British contingent was cleared out. The subsequent journey by goods train lasted four or five days and ended at Stalag V111 B at Lamsdorf in Upper Silesia near the Polish border. This camp nominally held over 50,000 British troops but the majority were billeted outside in individual working parties repairing roads and working on farms, in factories or down coal mines.

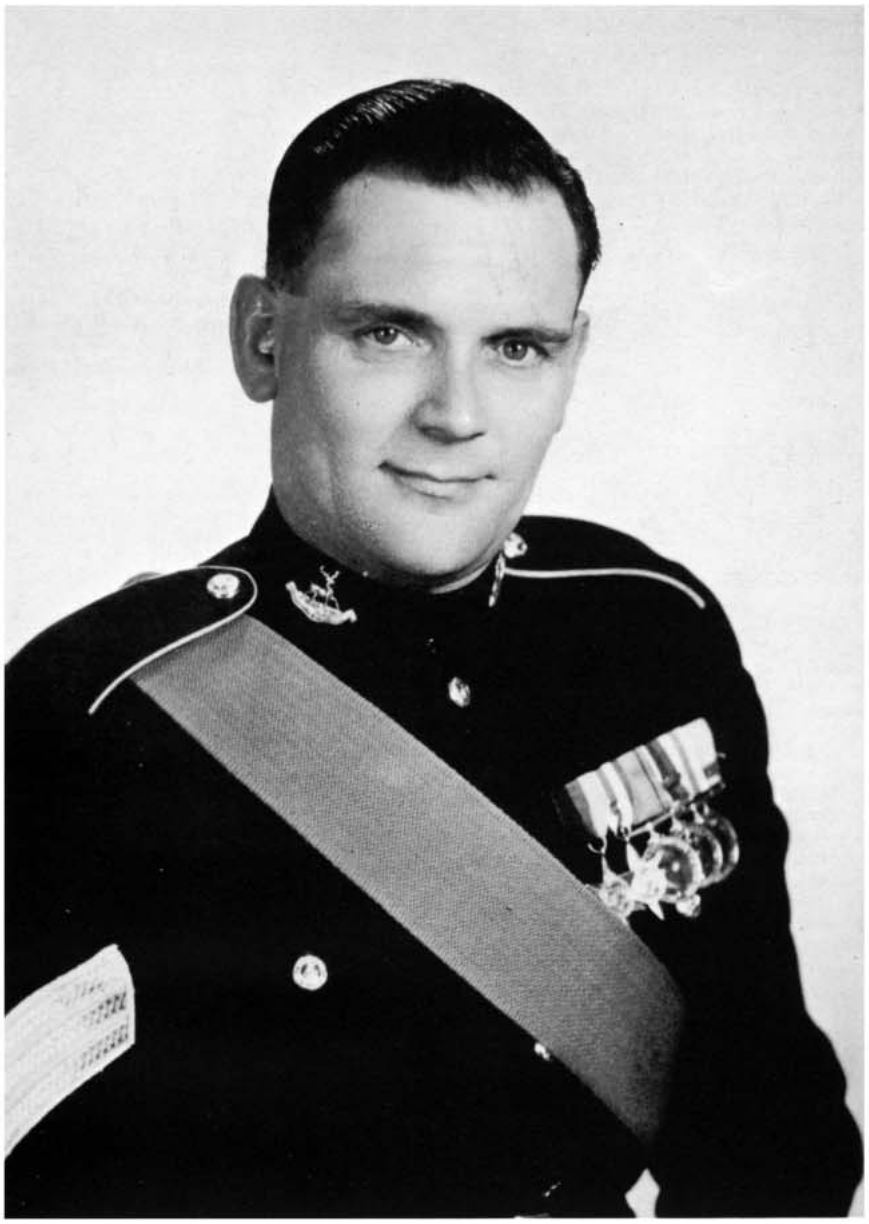
It was at Lamsdorf that Fred Drain was split from the others and thereafter lost contact with them, but over the next four years he tried to escape three times. The last time he got as far as Vienna Central Station having jumped a coal train bound for Italy. With a friend they had burrowed themselves into the corners of an open coal truck one night and lay covered up to their shoulders. Unfortunately they had not realised that the coal in each truck had been sprinkled with chalk so that signalmen, looking down as the train passed them, could easily spot if coal had been stolen or tampered with en route. The black corners were a dead give away and both were yanked out at Vienna. They were held in Vienna Central Gestapo prison for a week before being transported back to Germany.

Fred was finally liberated by American forces at Regensburg after the PoWs had been marched 1,500 kilometres in six weeks away from the advancing Russians. He stayed in the Army; went to Korea and became a Drill Sergeant with the Bedfords until he retired from the Forces in 1958.

After the four Commandos had left the village store at Torteval, Mr. Bourgaize buried Corporal Dumper's pistol in a tin lined with hay underneath his coal heap. Both he and his wife were very frightened as every home was being searched. Three months later, he recovered the tin to have a good look at the pistol but, to his dismay, the hay had 'sweated' in the closed tin and the weapon was pitted with rust. He buried it again beside the chimney stack where it stayed until the liberation.

After the war Mrs. Bourgaize wrote to the address one of the men had given her but she never received a reply. By 1978, just before their Golden Wedding anniversary, they decided to pass on the personal items to their nephew and the pistol was given to Richard Heaume for his museum.

Second Lieutenants Martel and Mulholland (who were to signal to the boats from Le Jaonnet beach by flashing the letter D in Morse if it was safe to come in) were also left on the island. As they were Guernseymen, they managed to find refuge with their families for some time while they tried to make good their escape but, in the end, realised it would be better to give themselves up. Tragically, Lieutenant Mulholland was accidentally killed on September 3, 1945 and was buried in St. Martin's Cemetery.



After he was liberated at the end of the war, Fred Drain carried on with his regiment serving time in Germany, Korea and at the unit's home base at Bedford. He became a Drill Sergeant and very smart he looks too being inspected by the Colonel of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment, Lieutenant-General Sir Reginald Denning. Fred told us he used to announce himself to new recruits as follows: 'My name's Drain. Now let's all have a good laugh and get it over with!'

The Doyle Monument, a hundred feet high, was erected to commemorate the works of Lieutenant-General Sir John Doyle (1750-1834), one of Guernsey's most industrious Governors. Before the war, one could collect the key and a torch from the caretaker at 'Doyle Bungalow' opposite the tower to climb the 133 steps to the observation platform.

Above: The Germans soon put paid to that. Although it served them as an excellent lookout post, and was provided with a canopy against inclement weather, it lay directly in line with the guns of Batterie Strassburg should they wish to fire towards France (Bundesarchiv). The answer was this spectacular explosion (Imperial War Museum and Royal Court). *Below:* This is the gun position with the rebuilt tower today.

We followed up Operation AMBASSADOR during our visit to Guernsey in April 1979. Today Petit Port is one of the few places where it is possible to retrace a Commando raid knowing that one is walking in the exact footsteps of the attackers. The steep stairway at Petit Port, leading from the beach to the Jerbourg Road, remains exactly as it was in 1940 except for repairs to worn steps. It is a stiff climb and one can imagine the exhaustion of the Commandos after climbing the steep stairway in sodden clothing weighed down with equipment. At the top the Doyle Column still stands although this is not the one seen by the Commandos. That monument was later blown up by the Germans and has since been rebuilt but on a more modest scale. At Torteval the general store is little changed except in name (no longer owned by the Bourgaizes) and not far away at Richard Heaume's German Occupation Museum one can see the pistol carried by Corporal Dumper on the first full-blooded raid undertaken by British Commandos in the Second World War.

CALAIS SPITFIRE

BY ANDY SAUNDERS

Peter Cazenove was one of that privileged band of young men who in the years before the war became 'weekend fliers' with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve — just for the fun of it — and whose very lives centred on the thrill of flying and the comradeship that being in the Royal Air Force continued to offer even after the fun had started to pall and the Auxiliaries became part of the backbone of Britain's defence.

Born on March 30, 1908, Peter Frederick Cazenove looked every inch the popular ideal of an RAF fighter pilot. Tall, athletic, good looking, educated at Eton, he cut a dashing figure in his tailor-made flying officer's uniform. As for the unusual surname, that stemmed from the arrival in England of members of the De Cazenove family who had been forced to flee from France as protestant Hugenots during the seventeenth century.

Remote fron the bitter fighting in France during the spring of 1940, Flying Officer Cazenove was stationed at RAF Northolt with No. 92 Squadron, which was becoming increasingly eager for a taste of the action.

Their zest for battle was given vent on May 23, 1940, when the squadron's Spitfires left at dawn for RAF Hornchurch, from where they began mounting patrols over the French coast. By about 8.30 a.m. they had run into six Messerschmitt Bf 109s, and the squadron suffered its first loss when Pilot Officer 'Pat' Learmond's Spitfire was seen to go down in flames near Calais. In the brief dog fight with the Bf 109s, it was afterwards claimed in the Squadron's Operational Record Book that all six were brought down, though this has not been confirmed by post-war research of German records.

The preservation tragedy of the decade. Flying Officer Peter Cazenove crash-landed his early Mark I Spitfire on the beach north of Calais during the final battles over Dunkirk in 1940. Buried for forty years in the shifting sands, a unique specimen was virtually lost due to the combined efforts of vandals, souvenir hunters and a hurried attempt to retrieve it in January 1981.

		COMMANDING OFFICER - FLYING OFFICER J.GILLIES and SGT.P.KLIPSCH(566457). FLIGHT LIEUTENANT C.P.GREEN was wounded in the leg and is now in Hospital at SHORNCLIFFE. The remainder of the Squadron returned to HORNCHURCH badly 'shot-up' with SEVEN SPITFIRES unserviceable. It has been a glorious day for the SQUADRON, with TWENTY-THREE GERMAN MACHINES brought down, but the loss of the COMMANDING OFFICER and the THREE OTHERS has been a very severe blow to us all, and to the SQUADRON which was created and trained last October by our late SQUADRON LEADER.
NORTHOLT/HORNCHURCH	24 MAY.	Another Patrol was carried out at 0830 hours from Hornchurch and another 7 MESSERSCHMITTS were attacked and brought down. This time we had only two losses, indeed one was only a slight casualty. FLIGHT LIEUTENANT TUCK was slightly wounded in the leg, but is able to continue the good work. FLYING OFFICER CAZENOVE forced landed on the land at CALAIS and it is supposed that he is now in enemy hands. Showers of rain during the day.
NORTHOLT/HORNCHURCH	25 MAY	A further Patrol was carried out in the mroning from Hornchurch and a DORNIER was attacked and brought down. In the afternoon the Squadron moved to DUXFORD to rest and re-equip. SQUADRON LEADER SAUNDERS is now posted to the Squadron as COMMANDING

Extract from No. 92 Squadron Operations Record Book (RAF Form 540) by courtesy of the Public Record Office.

Returning to base to refuel and re-arm, the squadron left again for France in the afternoon, now encountering a formation of forty enemy aircraft. This time seventeen Bf 110s were claimed as destroyed — but not without cost as Squadron Leader Bushell, Flying Officer Gillies and Sergeant Klipsch all failed to return. After the others had landed at Hornchurch, many badly shot-up and Flight Lieutenant Green wounded in the leg, seven Spitfires were logged as unserviceable.

A 'glorious day for the Squadron' was how the Squadron diary recorded the events of that day, but the glory must surely have been somewhat tarnished for the pilots in the gloom of the mess that evening — leaderless and with the familiar faces of friends and comrades missing from their midst.

With the German forces at the Channel coast and the BEF being forced to withdraw towards the sea, dawn on May 24 saw the squadron back at readiness for an 8.30 a.m. patrol from Hornchurch which resulted in a claim of seven Bf 109s destroyed. (This battle is described in Larry Forrester's *Fly for your Life*, and was the one in which Stanford-Tuck was saved from more serious injury by a penny in his pocket which was struck by a bullet. Had it hit him a few inches higher, according to the MO he would have had to have been transferred to the WAAF!)

During the melee, Peter Cazenove's Spitfire was struck in the radiator by a cannon shell, and the loss of coolant made a landing imperative. High over the French coast he considered his options: an attempt at gliding back across the Channel or a forced landing on the flat beaches close at hand. To try to glide back across the water was, he decided, too risky — he would be easy prey for enemy fighters, and if he should fall short of land then a ditching in the Channel was not something to be relished. Choosing therefore to try to put the aircraft down, he selected a stretch of beach below him, just outside Calais, which was still in British hands.

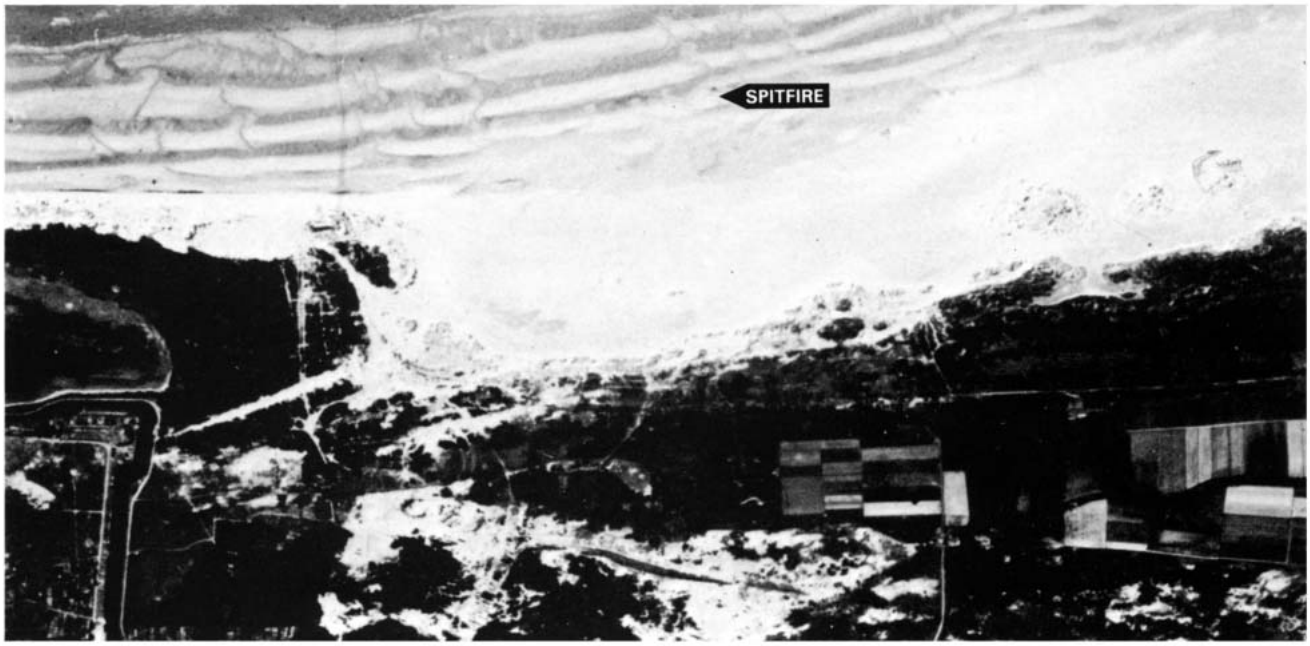
Flying in the same section as Peter Cazenove was Tony Bartley (in P9372, GR-N) who, alerted to Peter's predicament, followed his friend down to the beach. Crackling through the static in his headphones Tony heard Peter's voice, calm and collected, with a last message: 'Tell mother I'm OK. I will be back in a few days.' As the Spitfire thumped down, it threw up a sheet of sand and spray. Skidding along the beach, it grooved out a long furrow, bending the propellor and tearing off various under-cowlings and panels until, finally, one wing dug into the sand and the aircraft lurched round, coming to a halt midway between land and sea.

None the worse for his experience, he scrambled out and, mindful of the value of his aircraft to enemy intelligence, attempted to destroy the Spitfire by setting fire to it. He was unable to do so, however, and the uncomfortably close rattle of automatic fire coming from Calais and the crump of heavier weapons made him realise how vulnerable he was as he stood on the open beach in his stark white flying overalls.

Making for the town, where dense columns of thick smoke blackened the summer sky, Peter Cazenove came across the incinerated fragments of a Spitfire. Cremated among its wreckage were the remains of his friend — Pat Learmond.

Where Peter Cazenove had failed in his efforts to prevent his Spitfire from falling into German hands, nature succeeded in a matter of days. As successive tides passed back and forth over the aircraft so it was gradually swallowed up by the sands, until little remained above the surface. By the end of the war, only a single propeller blade projected from the beach to mark its position, but even this was later sawn off leaving nothing visible.

Although not of the best quality, photographs of the entire evacuation beach were taken on June 5, 1940. This is what we believe is the Spitfire wreck (RAF Crown Copyright).



Forty years passed until, in the summer of 1980, the sands began to deliver up their secret. First, the stump of the sawn off propeller blade emerged, followed by the spinner cone and top of the engine. Pools then formed in the sand around the wreck and, as the water washed around it, so more of the Spitfire emerged from its grave. By the autumn, enough of the airframe had surfaced to enable even those with the most rudimentary knowledge of aircraft recognition to identify it as a Spitfire.

Sooner or later, of course, the Press were bound to take an interest and, on September 16, the French newspaper *Nord Littoral* carried a report of the wreck plus photographs. The result was to be expected. A motley collection of the curious public, souvenir hunters, 'enthusiasts' and vandals were drawn to the site through the publicity it had been given. Virtually overnight the plane was vandalised and robbed — the rocker box covers were smashed to remove the Rolls-Royce embossing and the spinner cone was removed or wantonly destroyed. Also damaged was the starboard wing which protruded from the sand. To get at the Browning .303in machine guns, the wing had been smashed open and three of the four guns ripped out.

Only a few hundred yards south from the wreck lies the Calais hoverport, managed by an enthusiastic private pilot M. Jean Louf. His interest, imagination and curiosity had been fired by the appearance of the Spitfire, and the continued attentions of vandals prompted him to plan its recovery to enable positive identification to be established and to ensure its preservation. His plan was simple: to drag the aircraft out of the sand by cables and then, in accordance with French law, to offer the wreck to a museum.

On January 9, 1981, Jean Louf organised a bulldozer and cable to salvage the aircraft and a small recovery team assembled on the site. Once the cable had been fixed to the engine and propellor, the bulldozer started to tug at the wreck — with the result that the engine and a few ancillary items broke free from the airframe. Once the engine had been transported to safety, it was too late in the day to attempt recovery of the airframe as the tide was on the turn.

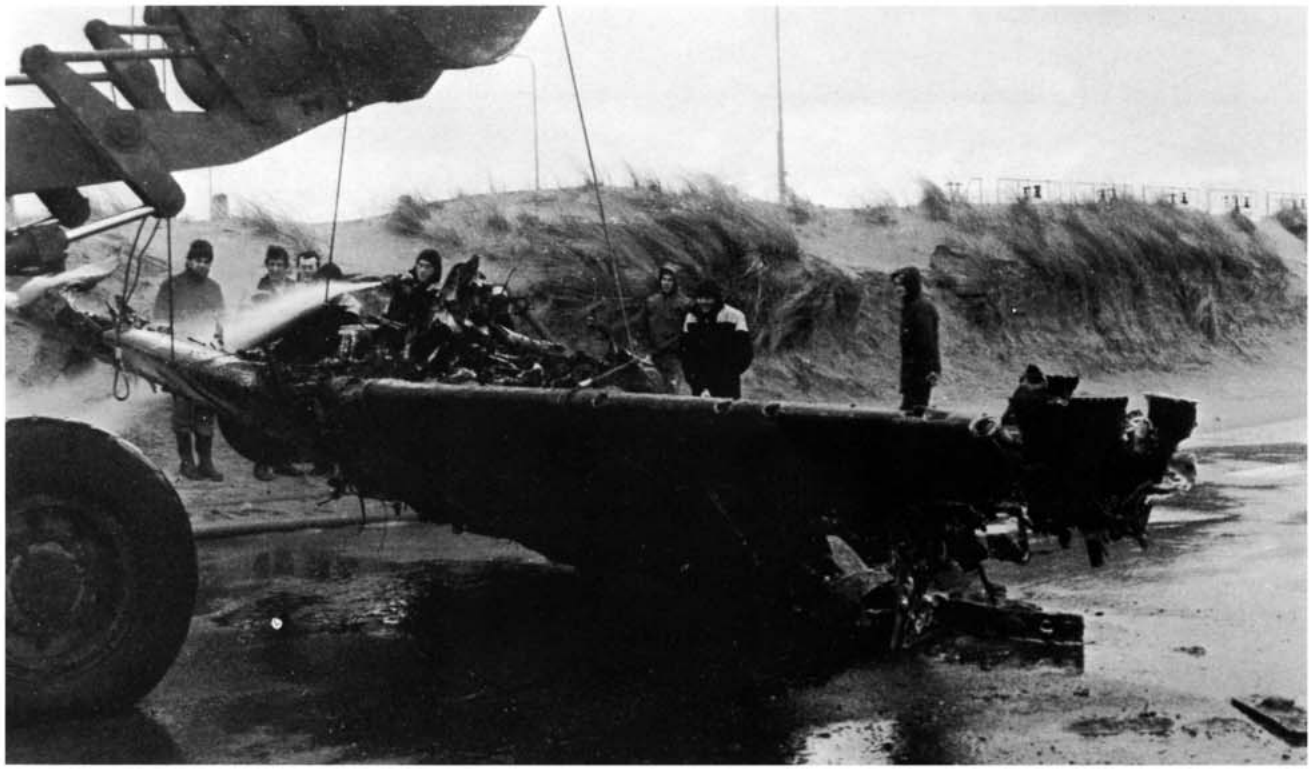
They say truth is stranger than fiction. It seems impossible to imagine that a completely intact aircraft could be buried on a beach close to a holiday resort and remain undiscovered for so many years.

The following day — using the same brute force methods as before — a fresh attempt was made at recovery. The already weakened and salt-corroded airframe could not stand up to such rigours, however, and only sizeable broken-up sections were retrieved; the largest among them being the cockpit and both wings, although much of the wing structure broke up during salvage. The massive weight of wet sand in the fuselage and wings, which had not been removed prior to the attempt, most certainly contributed to the aircraft only being recovered piecemeal and meant that much of the fuselage and tail were lost. After being salvaged, the remains were taken to the nearby hoverport where they were cleaned and stored away to await collection by the Musee de l'Air in Paris.

The trouble taken by Jean Louf in following up his interest in the buried Spitfire can only be commended, yet it is sad that time was not spent excavating around the aircraft first, thus freeing it from the heavy suction, or that the many tons of sand and silt were not removed from the aircraft before trying to bodily pull it from its grave. The extent of the damage to the aircraft may be judged from the photographs taken before and after recovery.

The reported existence of this wreck in a British enthusiast magazine and other publications during the final weeks of 1980, and also various rumours, surprisingly did little to stir the aircraft recovery groups, museums or enthusiasts in the UK. In fact, the credibility of the reports and photographs reaching this country were openly doubted.

Although Monsieur Louf's rescue attempt was undoubtedly well meaning, the damage caused could have been obviated if one or other of the British aviation archaeology groups had been called in. Andy Saunders of the Wealden Aviation Archaeological Group went hotfoot to France after he had confirmed the existence of the Spitfire but, alas, too late — the damage had been done just one week beforehand.



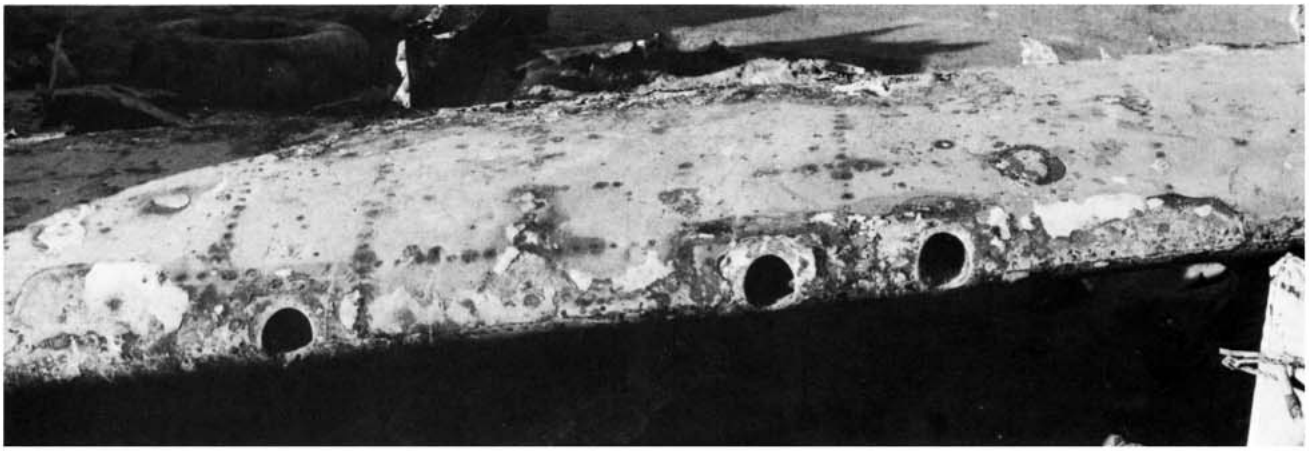
It was gratifying therefore, having managed to make contact with M. Louf on January 15, to be able to confirm that the Spitfire did indeed exist and really had been recovered the previous weekend. It was also established that no identity of the aircraft had been found, and that it was due to be transported from Calais hoverport to Paris on the following Monday (January 19). Thus, if a visit was to be made to inspect what remained of the aircraft in order to photograph and identify it, then speed was of the essence and a journey to Calais was planned for Saturday 17th.

Despite the large sections that remained — notably the wings, cockpit and engine — on arrival it became apparent just how badly damaged the airframe had become. All the same, still intact in the cockpit were the seat, armour-plating, control column and a few instruments and controls. The compass remained in place, glass still intact, and on the starboard side of the cockpit were the morse tapper, emergency undercarriage lever and the early type 'pump-up' undercarriage selector. Most of the instrumentation had gone, but the lower part of the panel remained, with the Ki-Gas primer pump and fuel cock still in place.

It was still possible to sit in the undamaged seat, feet on rudder pedals (complete with straps and 'Supermarine' embossing) with the control column between one's knees and get the 'feel' of sitting in a Spitfire. Corrosion was minimal. The last vestiges of the camouflage paint could still be seen on some parts and remnants of the red-doped canvas patches were still in place around the gun ports.

The four .303in Brownings removed from the port wing were perhaps one of the more remarkable features of the find, all in pristine condition and almost capable of being fired. (Only one was left in the starboard wing.) It was this battery of guns which was to provide the important clue to the Spitfire's history.

At Calais, the machine guns were being stripped, cleaned and reassembled, and the process involved the total cleaning of the spent case and link chutes on each gun. Very often this part, on early Marks of Spitfire at least,



has the aircraft serial number stencilled in red in three-eighths of an inch characters. Only one such chute remained uncleaned . . . and examination of this revealed the number P9374. Further confirmation of this number was sought elsewhere, but as most of the paintwork had been lifted by salt water action, thus obliterating any clues, it could only be found, very faintly, on the inside of one of the removable access panels from the wing.

Additional evidence was sought from the engine, which was in remarkable shape apart from the smashed rocker box covers. The Rolls-Royce data plate gave the type as Merlin III, number 143668. This could only serve to strengthen any identification, but alone would not be sufficient to positively identify the history of the airframe. A check with Air Ministry Form 78 (Aircraft Record Card) for P9374 gave the aircraft as lost in a 'Flying Battle Occurrence' on May 24, 1940, while on the strength of No. 92 Squadron. The record card confirmed the engine number for this airframe as 143668.

Spitfire P9374 carried the code letters GR-J and was built by Vickers Armstrong. Delivered to No. 9 Maintenace Unit (MU) on March 2, 1940, from there it went to No. 92 Squadron on March 6. At the time of its loss it had a total flying life of just thirty-two hours, five minutes.

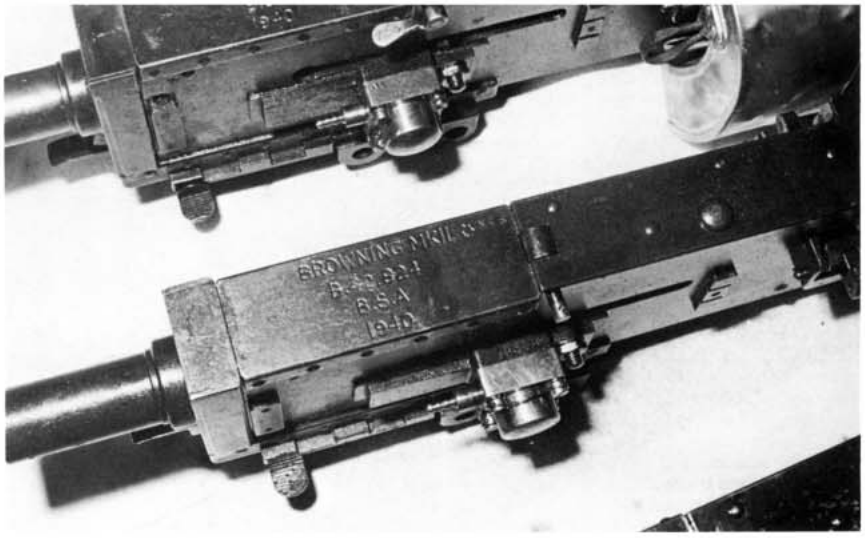
The engine was built at Derby on October 27, 1939 under Rolls-Royce number 13769 and delivered to No. 14 MU Carlisle on November 6, being recorded later as 'written off'.

Monsieur Louf shows Andy the Merlin. The engine number provided an additional clue although, by itself, it could not be conclusive as power plants were switched from aircraft to aircraft.

Remarkably well preserved, the .303in Brownings were almost in ex-factory condition after cleaning. Three guns had already been removed by unknown hands prior to the recovery. It was a number, stencilled on the aluminium spent case chute (seen on the right-hand side of two of the guns) which gave Andy the clue to the Spitfire's identity. The Aircraft Record Card confirmed the story.

The remains have now been transported to Villacoublay, the one-time Luftwaffe base on the outskirts of Paris, where they are in storage for the Musee de l'Air. It is understood that the engine and armament have been earmarked for exhibition, and it is to be hoped that if the remains of the airframe are not displayed then they will, nevertheless, be preserved and not destroyed. Some small remains of the airframe probably still lay buried on the site although, by now of course, time and tide have once more covered over their location.

When the aircraft had been crash-landed in May 1940, and Peter Cazenove had made his way into Calais, the town was besieged by the 10. Panzerdivision and he found himself fighting with the Rifle Brigade in the desperate rearguard action that preceded its capture during the late afternoon of May 26.



When Andy sat in the pilot's seat, he was unaware of the Spitfire's identity . . . or of the sad ending to this story. (All pictures at Calais hoverport by Paul Strudwick.)

Twice he narrowly escaped death: once when the army officer he was talking to was shot dead and on another occasion when a glass was smashed out of his hand by a bullet whilst he was sheltering in a cellar.

During the five years (bar ten days) of captivity that followed, he was involved in the preparations for the 'Great Escape' from Stalag Luft III and as one of the 'penguins' in the escape operation itself. Squadron Leader Roger Bushell (played in the film of the same name by Richard Attenborough) was one of the escapers whose name was euphemistically listed with forty-nine others as having been shot whilst attempting to escape.

Before being liberated, the prisoners had to undergo a forced march away from the advancing Red Army, and it is not surprising that his wartime experiences should have taken their mental and physical toll. Typical of the man, however, was Peter Cazenove's action in sending food parcels to his former guards and captors who were then experiencing privations themselves at the hands of the Russians.

Sadly, though, while P9374 was coming to life Peter Cazenove lay dying at his home on the South Coast. In the circumstances, it was perhaps natural that his thoughts should have turned momentarily once more towards the intriguing question as to what had happened to his Spitfire after he had careered down onto the coast of France at a high point in his life — but he was to die on Sunday, December 7, 1980, unaware to the last that the aircraft had in fact been found exactly where he had left it on May 24, 1940.

It had been his intention to trace the pilot and take him back to France. With the help of the RAF's casualty branch, the family were contacted only to find that Peter Cazenove had passed away barely six weeks previously. What made the tragedy worse was the fact that he had spoken of his lifelong desire to know what had happened to his aircraft to his wife just before he died.

AIRCRAFT

A.M. Form 78.

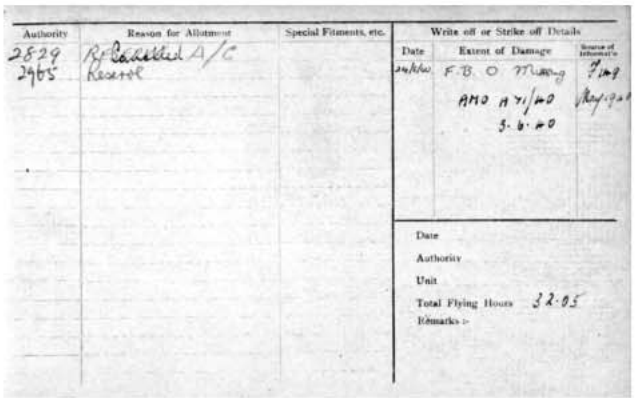
Contract No. 980385/38

Type SPITFIRE R.A.F. No. P 9374 Contractors VICKERS ARMSTRONGS

Type of Engine MERLIN III Engine Nos. 14368

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Taken on Charge of	9 M.U.	9258 PM							
Date taken on Charge	2/3/40	6-3-40							
Authority	1582a	1/23 A.							
Taken on Charge of	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
Date taken on Charge									
Authority									

Date	Unit to whom allotted	Authority	Date	Unit to whom allotted	Authority
15.2.40	2 Cancelled	2829			
28.2.40	9 M.U.	2965			



Authority	Reason for Allotment	Special Fitments, etc.	Write off or Strike off Details: Date	Extent of Damage	Source of Information re
2829	R/C Cancelled A/C		24/5/40	F.B.O. Missing	Flt
2965	Reserve			AMO A71/40 5.6.40	Flt

Date

Authority

Unit

Total Flying Hours 32:05

Remarks:-

ASCENSION ISLAND

BY JEFF CANT

Ascension juts up into the South Atlantic eight degrees south of the Equator and fourteen degrees west of the Greenwich Meridian. A remote outcrop of volcanic origin, seven miles by six, its topography resembles the remains of a giant coke fire: an arid combination of volcanic ash, debris and solidified lava, with several extinct cones, some rising steeply to over 1,000 feet; lowlands to the west, uplands to the east surmounted by the island's highest peak, Green Mountain, 2,800 feet above sea level and supporting on its upper slopes a single, small farm.

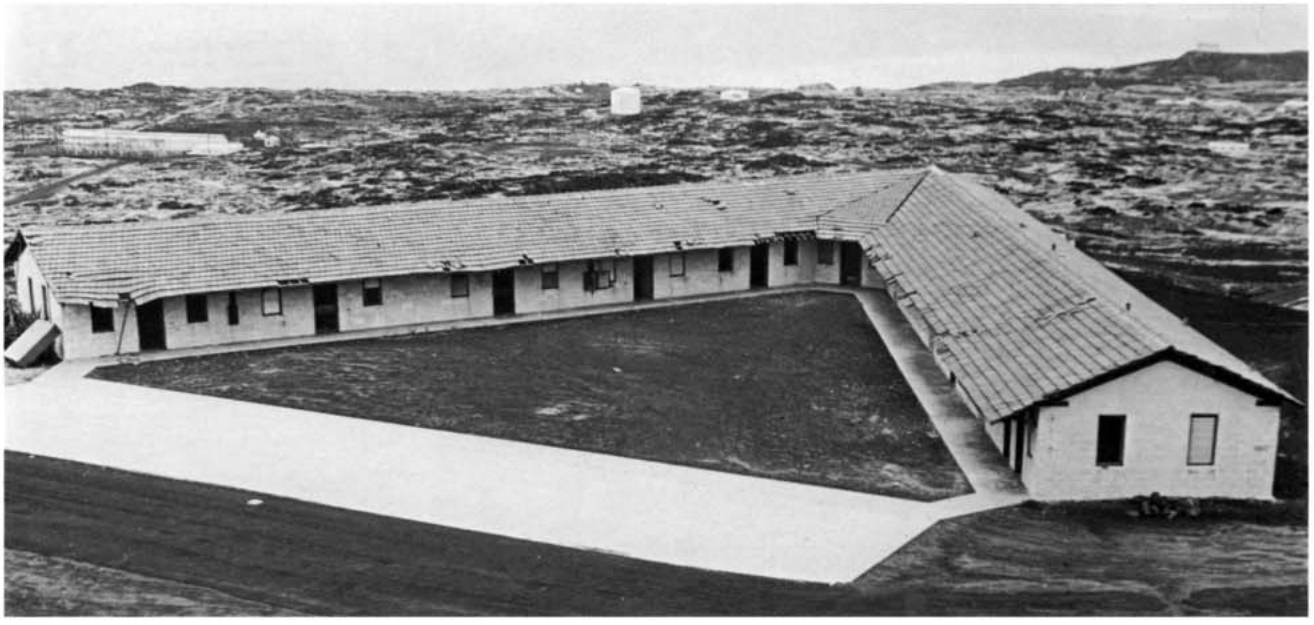
On Ascension Day 1501 the Portuguese came upon the island, but it remained a heap of cinders that no nation bothered to claim until the Royal Navy put men ashore in 1815 to forestall the possibility of any attempt by the French to use the island to rescue Napoleon from St. Helena, some 700 miles to the south. After the Emperor's death in 1821, the garrison continued in existence for a hundred years as a recuperative and victualling base for Navy vessels operating off the coast of West Africa — a naval station but one where horticulture and livestock were evidently on a par with military duties for the Royal Marines who served there.

When, at the turn of the century, the laying of an undersea telegraph cable from the Cape to join the one from St. Vincent to Britain brought the Eastern Telegraph Company to the island to set up a repeater station, Ascension became established as the vital communications link that it has been ever since. Further cables were laid from South America and, when the Navy started to introduce radio communication with ships at sea, Ascension was ideally placed for a radio station with a synchronous spark gap transmitter and planned range of 1,800 miles, built with the utmost secrecy in 1915.

The Admiralty finally brought its tenure to an end in 1922, whereupon the Eastern Telegraph Company (later Cable and Wireless) took over the running of the island in the person of the company's general manager who was appointed resident magistrate and representative of the Government of St. Helena, of which Ascension became a dependency when the Navy left.

When the time came, the job of getting the island back onto a war footing began. As in Britain, there was a response to the call for what later became the Home Guard and in May 1940 an Ascension company was formed. The general manager now added the title of commanding officer with the rank of captain to his other official capacities and, together with NCOs sent up from St. Helena, set about training his unit — though their rifles would probably have been little use against any determined sea-borne assault. Then, in March 1941, two 5.5-inch guns and a section of Royal Artillery arrived to bolster up the defences. The only centre of population on the

Above: **The American HQ building on Command Hill pictured on February 12, 1944 (USAF).** *Below:* **Today it still stands although in need of roof repairs.**

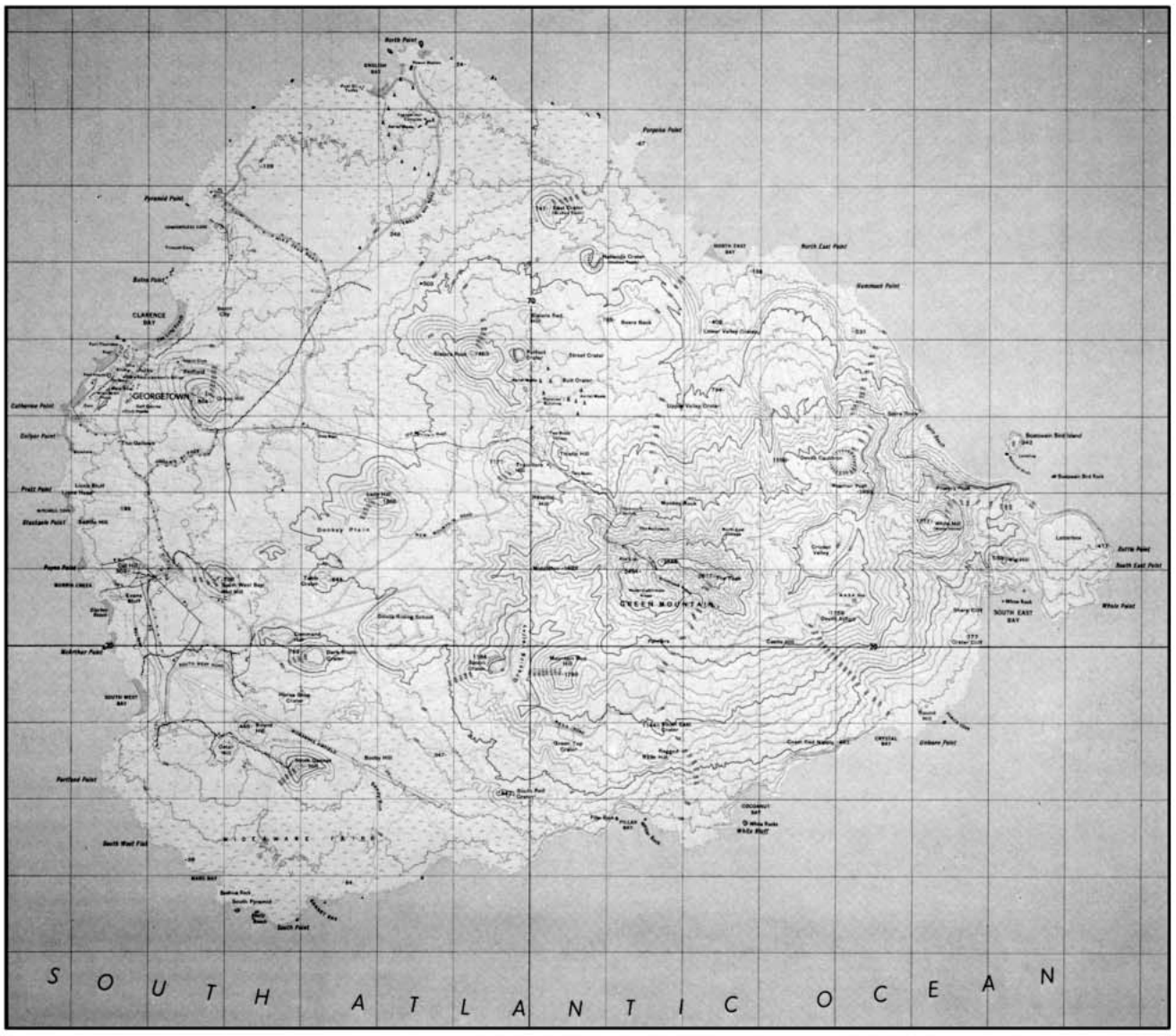


coast being Georgetown, the guns were dragged by block and tackle 300 feet up the loose clinker slopes of Cross Hill, where, when the ammunition bunkers and emplacements were completed, they made a brave show overlooking the sea and houses nestling below.

Life could still hardly be said to have changed beyond recall, however, when in November 1941 the general manager, Captain Cardwell, received secret instructions from St. Helena to make a survey of suitable places for an airstrip. Despite being the ancient nesting place of Sooty Terns, the flattish area of South West Plains was an obvious choice and his report was forwarded to St. Helena. To the excitement of the population, the sequel occurred on Christmas Day when the cruiser USS *Omaha* appeared off Georgetown and a reconnaissance party came ashore. After examining the terrain they approved the choice of site and recommendations were sent to both the British and American authorities.

As early as 1936 the United States had cast an eye towards Ascension and considered the uses to which this piece of rock might be put in the event of war. Now, after Pearl Harbor, it was clear that delivery of the vast numbers of aircraft which would be required could be achieved by using operational crews to fly them to the various theatres. To do this across the North Atlantic demanded much more planning and construction because of the distance involved and the less favourable weather. However, with an airbase on Ascension, even twin-engined aircraft and

Water was a valuable commodity on Ascension during the war and could not be wasted. This is the Air Transport Command 'accommodation' beside the airstrip.



inexperienced crews could hop across the ocean after flying down the east coast of Brazil. North Africa and the desert airfields could be supplied by a South Atlantic route and similarly there was the possibility of reinforcing the Far East by flying on from Khartoum after the African crossing.

On March 29, 1942, a military task force 1,300-strong arrived under the command of Colonel Robert E. Coughlin, US Corps of Engineers. They came equipped with large quantities of road-making machinery and other heavy construction gear and brought in guns for the island's protection. Work started immediately on the construction of the runway and base facilities, some thirty-five tons of explosives being used during the levelling of the airstrip and 380,000 cubic yards of material — much of it solid rock — being excavated. One of the essentials for the air-base was a stockpile of aviation fuel, and six large tanks were erected behind Cross Hill. These were camouflaged to avoid detection from the air and dummy tanks were built on Long Beach as decoy targets for any bombardment from the sea.

As the American engineers pushed on round the clock, to the handful of British and St. Helena staff still remaining, Ascension was being bulldozed from a peaceful backwater of pre-war days into the age of air warfare and, on May 10, 1942, Colonel James Tomlinson of the Royal Engineers arrived charged with drawing up an Anglo-American Draft Agreement and staying throughout the war to keep an eye on British and St. Helenian interests as the Government representative.

He had been on the island only a month before the Americans were in a position to inform Washington on June 12 that the runway was sufficiently advanced for emergency use. While arrangements proceeded for an official opening, however, the honour of the first touch-down went to a Fairey Swordfish V4653 from the escort carrier HMS *Archer*. The aircraft, flown by Lieutenant Dixon-Child, was endeavouring to drop a message for transmission to the Admiralty concerning the torpedoed ship SS *Lyle Castle* and, since the pilot was unaware of the presence of the Americans, which had been kept secret, he arrived over the island unidentified and unannounced. Consequently the aircraft was fired upon by a machine gun but, fortunately, the pilot himself was not hit and the Swordfish landed safely, returning to the carrier three hours later.

Above: **Wideawake Field on May 7, 1944. Included in the mixed bag of aircraft are Dakotas/Skytrains, Liberators, Marauders, a Boston, Catalina and some Baltimores in Royal Air Force markings (USAF).** *Below:* **Nose Hangar in 1979.**

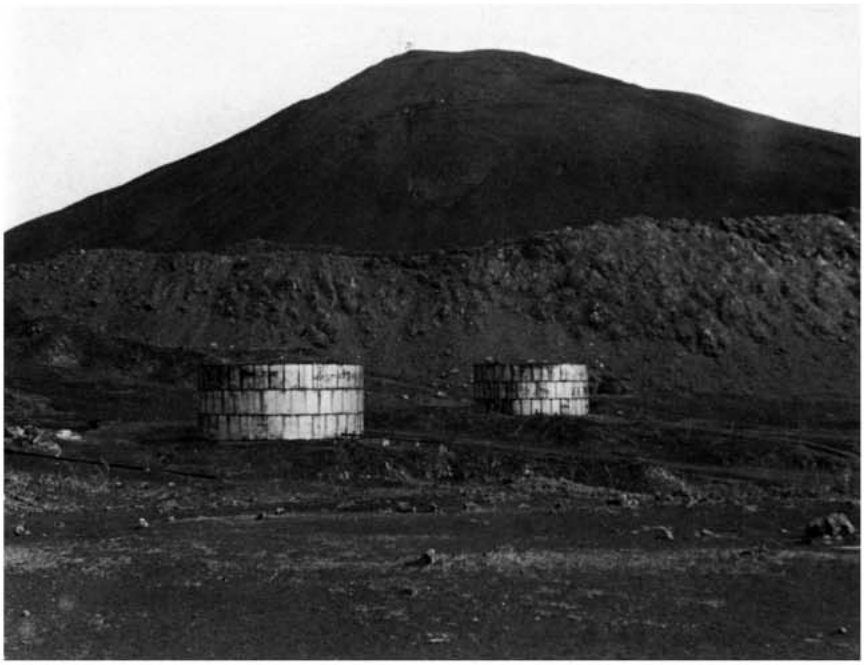
The first American aircraft, carrying a staff of inspecting officers, arrived from Accra on July 10 and left the next day for Natal, Brazil. With the base in operation, it soon became obvious that the Sooty Terns would not be moved from their nesting grounds by the airstrip where they regularly returned to lay and hatch their eggs before departing for another year at sea. Several methods were tried to persuade them to move but, to the despair of the Air Traffic Control officers, all of them failed and the birds' mocking cry of 'Wideawake' became the unofficial name for the airstrip.

On August 14 the main occupying force arrived, commanded by Colonel Ross Baldwin, and soon the engineers left for the Congo to build an airfield at Leopoldville. Colonel Baldwin's force included the 3rd Battalion of the 91st Regiment, two artillery batteries, a searchlight platoon and personnel for the medical services. The Army Air Force contingent was commanded by Colonel James Ronin, its largest unit being the 1st Composite Squadron, which comprised an unusual combination of B-25C Mitchell bombers for sea patrols and eighteen Bell P-39D Airacobra fighters for local island defence.

One of the early detachments to become operational was the 692nd Signal Aircraft Warning Company which manned the two radar stations. These were both on the slopes of Green Mountain, one by the side of the old mountain road to the farm and the other on the opposite, easterly side. This was approached by Reecer's Road, a very narrow affair named after the American bulldozer driver who cut the shelf-like path, standing up in case his machine should start to topple. After two years of constant use by supply vehicles carrying fuel for the generator, a heavy rainstorm caused a landslip which eventually half-buried another bulldozer sent to clear a way through.

Down on the ash plains overlooking Long Beach, to the north of Georgetown, was another reason for Ascension's importance: a Royal Navy direction-finding station that had been erected early in the war for the tracking of U-Boats and their destruction. This station with those at St. Helena and Freetown, all linked by cable, enabled very speedy triangulation of any U-Boat signal.

In September 1942, a garbled report was received on the island from Freetown that the liner *Laconia* had been torpedoed and sunk by the *U-156* in the South Atlantic, some 250 miles from Ascension. Korvettenkapitaen Werner Hartenstein, the captain, had in fact stopped to rescue some Italian prisoners who were among the passengers and, in response to his radioed request for assistance, two other German submarines came to help in the rescue operation. The Americans, however, had no idea of the humane activities of the submarines and were thus spared the dilemma of whether or not to bomb them. A Consolidated B-24D Liberator from the 343rd Bombardment Squadron, which had been delayed by mechanical trouble while in transit to the Middle East, was available and, having the necessary range, was despatched. The *U-156* was attacked and claimed as sunk — with the result that Admiral Doenitz issued his directive forbidding U-Boat commanders to hazard their vessels by rescuing or aiding torpedoed survivors. (When, after the war, this order was submitted as evidence by the Allies towards a capital charge at the Nuremberg War Trials, it was discounted



Above: **Dummy fuel tanks on Long Beach complete with pumping station** *below.*

Below: **The real fuel store used during the war was constructed on the ash plain behind Cross Hill. Today the tanks are rusting and the pumping equipment derelict.**

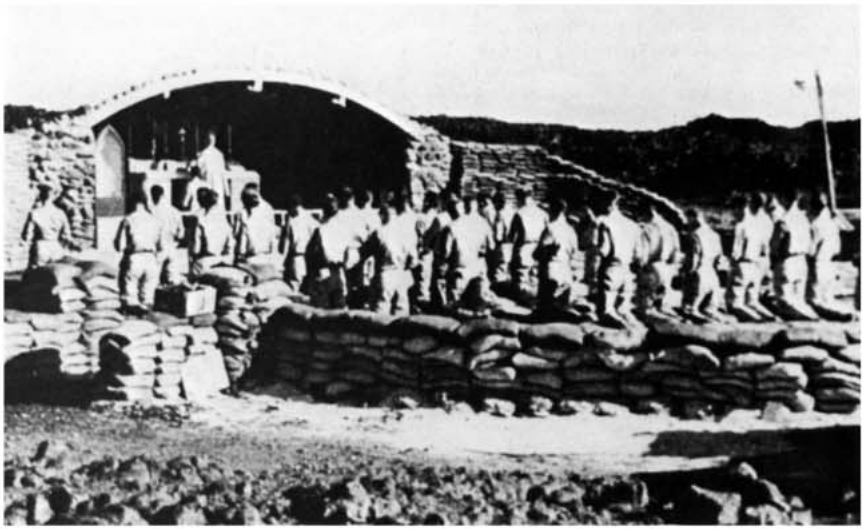
after the Court was informed that American submarine commanders were instructed to follow the same general policy in the Pacific.)

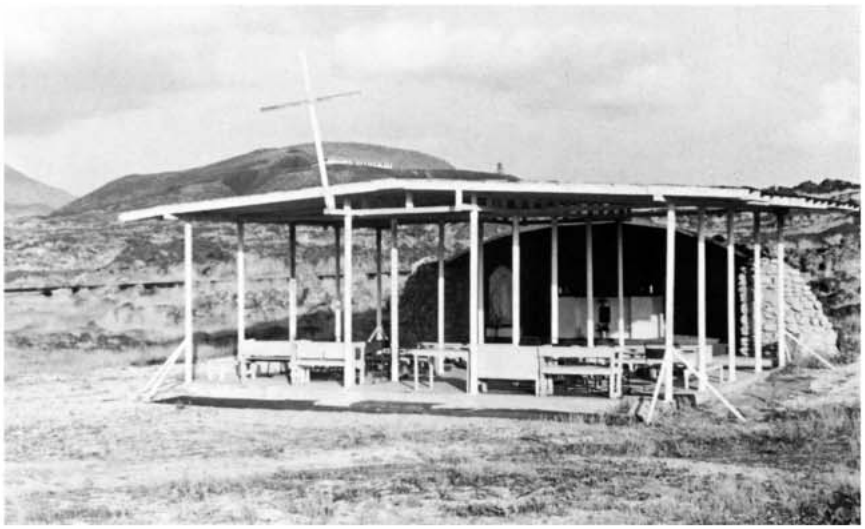
An Ascension Detachment of US Navy Bombing Squadron VB107 was formed in September 1943 to facilitate anti-submarine sweeps in the South Atlantic. Consolidated PB4Y-1 aircraft were flown out to the island when needed and two submarines (*U-848* and *U-849*) were sunk in the month of November. It has been suggested that the breaking of German and Japanese naval codes led to their destruction, and it is possible that similar intelligence may have been responsible for the three blockade runners which were sunk by US Navy destroyers in conjunction with the Ascension-based aircraft during January 1944. Natural wastage and this highly organised intelligence operation allowed the 1st Composite Squadron to be withdrawn at about this time and the responsibility for all air patrols was then given to the US Navy.

While the long, dreary anti-submarine patrols droned on, interrupted only by brief spells of violent and often deadly action, the steady ferrying of aircraft continued. As well as the combat crews delivering their own aircraft, ferry crews now helped to maintain the numbers as American war production built up. Normally the aircraft stopped just long enough for refuelling — the passengers and crew being driven to the mess hall for food before returning for take-off — although some crews stayed overnight and were able to sample one of the films shown in the open-air cinemas or to try the ice-cream and Coca-Cola (the US base being 'dry' for the duration). The whole operation was organised to pass the maximum number of planes possible, the record for one day being ninety-eight. For the first few months, the American desire for security kept figures of aircraft movements secret, even from the British Resident, but it would appear that about 20,000 aircraft used the airstrip from July 1942 to May 1945.

Notwithstanding the rhyme repeated to all airmen bound for the island: 'If you don't reach Ascension, your wife will get a pension,' the American radio beacon and constant cloud plume from the top of Green Mountain were good navigational aids and, apart from the tropical front off the African coast and sometimes torrential rain, the flight had few hazards other than the constant worry of an engine failure. The first recorded crash was a P-39 belonging to the 1st Composite Squadron which ditched off the island on September 3, 1942 after a fuel failure. Luckily it happened within sight of a look-out post and the pilot was rescued unharmed. The last crash during wartime happened on the day after the island had celebated the end of the war in Europe, when twelve died on a Douglas C-54 transport attempting to land after a flight from Accra.

After VE-Day the base was rapidly run down, the flood of planes becoming a trickle and finally stopping in 1947 when the base was deactivated. Any material not removed by the Americans was utilised by the remaining Cable and Wireless employees and the runway thereafter used for driving lessons.





The incongruities of war. *Above:* **GIs built this chapel on Ascension and surrounded it with sandbags.** *Below:* **The chapel, called The Grotto, still stands to serve the Roman Catholics of the Island.**

The radar building by the side of the road up Green Mountain photographed in 1979.

This natural stone observation post for the 5.5-inch gun still stands on Cross Hill.

Above: **One of the 5.5-inch guns emplaced behind Georgetown. Long Beach lies in the background.** *Below:* **Weapons of a former era — Victorian muzzle-loaders on Cross Hill with a 5.5-inch behind.**

Rumours exist about intact aircraft being buried at the end of the runway but, as the airstrip was doubled in length when the Americans returned in 1956 to use the island in association with their Eastern Rocket Test Range, it is perhaps questionable whether much would remain today. Of the few wartime structures still standing on the island, the most impressive is the nose hangar made of imported mahogany which continues to serve as the airport terminal and fire security offices — and, as Ascension has a dry climate with very low rainfall and a constant breeze, there seems no reason why this building should not stand for many years to come. Up on what became known as Command Hill, overlooking the runway, is the unused wartime headquarters building roofed with red tiles brought in from Recife, Brazil; the present American base being now half-way between the airstrip and Georgetown. Above Georgetown itself stand the two 5.5-inch guns and their emplacements, quietly basking in the sun like the empty fuel tanks by Cross Hill and whatever pump-work was left in situ. All over the island lie the tell-tale piles of white shell sand which filled the sand bags, long since rotted, that formerly protected or formed the many observation posts, whilst the perished remains of old army telephone cables which connected the four wartime exchanges can sometimes be seen protruding from the ground.

A small museum was founded a few years ago, housed in one of the old Marine forts in Georgetown. Among the exhibits, an amazing selection of artefacts can be seen, from Victorian bottles to radio direction-finding equipment, all dug up from this strange, desolate but haunting island.

RECORD OF TRIAL
of

AFTER THE BATTLE
CRIME IN WWII

Slovik (Last name) Eddie D. (First name and middle initial) 36896415 (Army serial No.)

Private (Grade) Company G, 109th Infantry (Organization)

Rotgen, Germany (Station)

By

GENERAL COURT MARTIAL
Appointed by the Commanding Officer

28th Infantry Division

Tried at

Rotgen, Germany 11 November, 1944

THE EXECUTION OF EDDIE SLOVIK

COURT-MARTIAL
European Theater of Operations
No. 5555
CHARGE: Violation of the 58th Article of War.

Specification 1: In that Private Eddie D. Slovik, Company G, 109th Infantry did, at or near Elbeuf, France, on or about 25 August 1944, desert the service of the United States by absenting himself without proper leave from his organization, with intent to avoid hazardous duty and to shirk important service, to wit: action against the enemy, and did remain absent in desertion until he was delivered to United States military authorities by Canadian military authorities at or near Brussels, Belgium, on or about 4 October 1944.

Specification 2: In that * * * did, at or near Rocherath, Belgium, on or about 8 October 1944, desert the service of the United States by absenting himself without proper leave from his organization, with intent to avoid hazardous duty and to shirk important service, to wit: action against the enemy, and did remain absent in desertion until he surrendered himself at or near Rocherath, Belgium, on or about 9 October 1944.

Thus read the charge against 24-year-old Private Eddie Slovik at the US General Court-Martial convened at Rotgen, twenty miles south of Aachen, on November 11, 1944. The trial lasted just 100 minutes before the President of the Court, Colonel Guy M. Williams, pronounced the sentence: To be dishonourably discharged the service; to forfeit all pay and allowances due or to become due and to be shot to death with musketry.

Edward Donald Slovik was born of an American mother and Polish father in Ionia, Michigan in 1920. He had a record of petty crime as a youngster and was graded 4-F after he was released from Michigan Reformatory (located in Ionia) in April 1942. Although this indicated that the United States would be unlikely to call him up, by 1943 the army was getting short on manpower for the escalating American involvement in Europe and the Pacific. Acceptance of lowly graded men as 'replacement privates' was the answer — albeit a poor one.

Neither the charge nor the sentence were unique during the Second World War. It was inevitable that deprivation, the dismal conditions at the front, lack of sleep, loneliness or even bullying, temptation of the easier life in rear areas, fear, or sheer exhaustion would test each combat soldier to his individual limit. It was therefore to be expected that some would lack the moral fibre (LMF in British Army jargon) to continue and that they would reach the point at which desertion became the lesser evil.

The attitude towards and treatment of Combat Exhaustion — referred to as CE by American forces — varied according to armies and divisions. To many professional men in authority, the concept was clear-cut: an able-bodied man who will not fight or deserts his comrades in time of war does not deserve to live. Others — the chaplains, medical officers and psychiatrists — cast doubts on this cut-and-dried approach and some favoured a more compassionate view: that it was a mental disorder necessitating treatment.

An insight into the background of many battlefront desertions may be gained from these excerpts from a report by the Office of the United States Surgeon General which was ordered to be distributed to combat and other units by General Eisenhower on October 4, 1944:

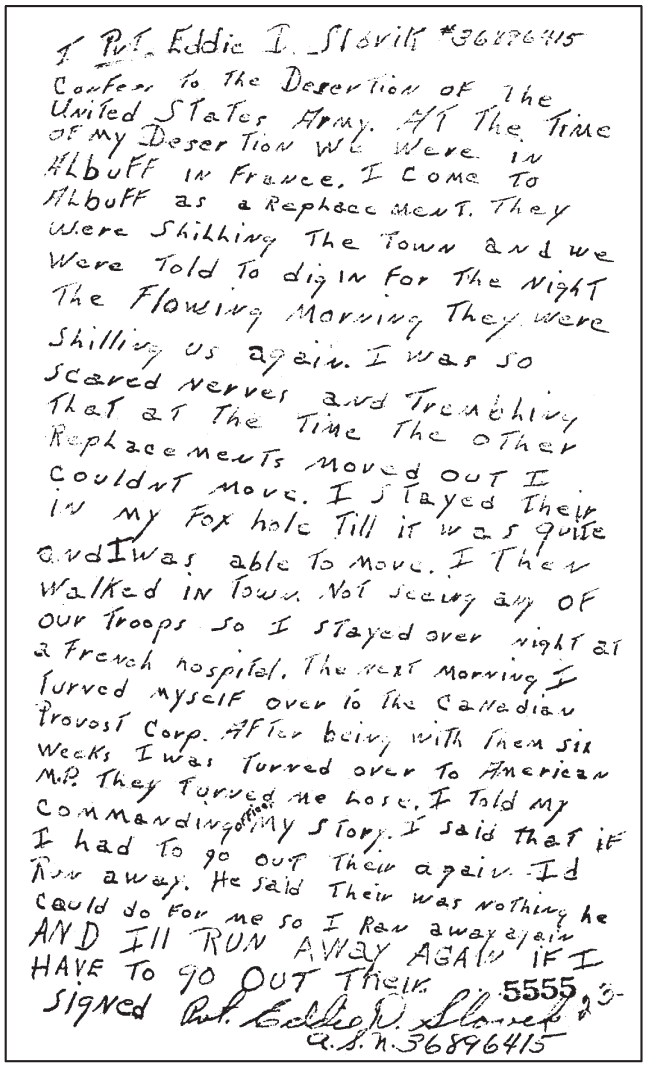
'The key to an understanding of the psychiatric problem is the simple fact that the danger of being killed or maimed imposes a strain so great that it causes men to break down. One look at the shrunken, apathetic faces of psychiatric patients as they come down stumbling into the medical station, sobbing, trembling, referring shudderingly to 'them shells' and to buddies mutilated or dead, is enough to convince most observers of this fact. There is no such thing as 'getting used to combat'. Each man 'up there' knows that at any moment he may be killed, a fact kept constantly before his mind by the sight of dead and mutilated buddies around him. Each moment of combat imposes a strain so great that men will break down in direct relation to the intensity and duration of their exposure. Thus psychiatric casualties are as inevitable as gunshot and shrapnel wounds in warfare.

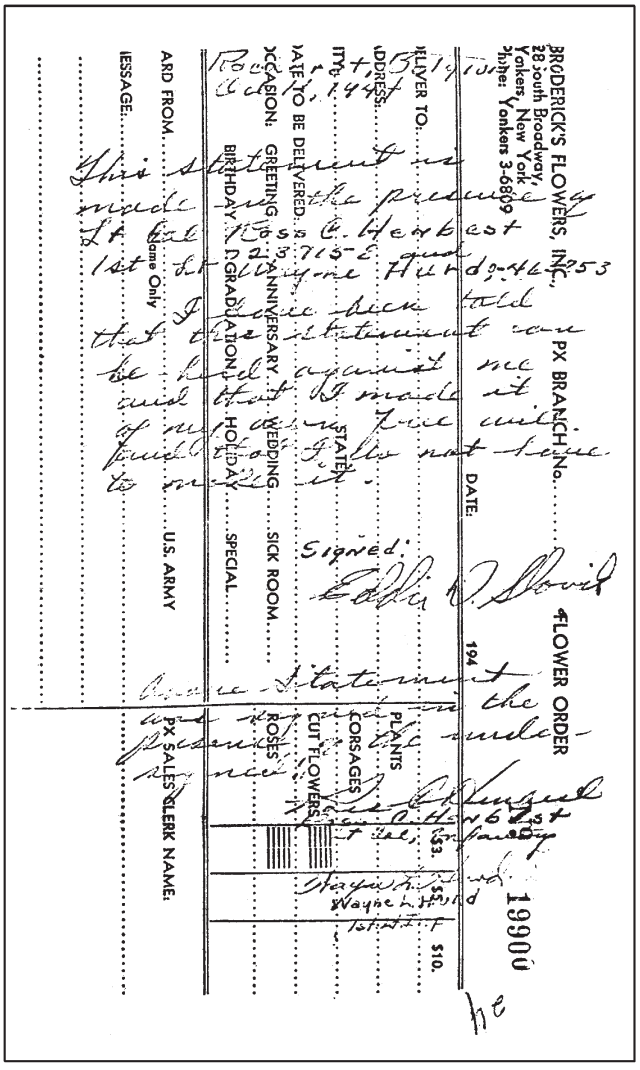
'The effective combat life of the average infantryman appears to depend largely upon how continuously he is used in combat. The British, for example, estimate that their riflemen in Italy will last about 400 regimental combat days, about twice as long as US riflemen in the heavily used US divisions in Italy. They attribute this difference to their policy of pulling infantrymen out of the line at the end of twelve days or less for a rest of four days. The American soldier in Italy, on the other hand, was usually kept in the line without relief for twenty or thirty days, frequently for thirty to forty, and occasionally for eighty days. Although tactical requirements may have required this policy, the fact that a man wears out in combat has apparently been insufficiently recognized by command.

'It is rudimentary knowledge that behaviour is determined by motivation, but it is a fact which appears not to have been applied to the infantryman. Under present policy no man is removed from combat duty until he has become worthless. The infantryman considers this a bitter injustice. He feels that he is expected to do ten, or even a hundred times as much to win the war as anyone else, but he can look forward only to death, mutilation, or psychiatric breakdown. He feels that no one at home has the slightest conception of the danger his job entails or of the courage and guts required to do one hour of it.

'The doughboy is willing to do what he considers 'his share', but after that he sees no reason to keep on. All he wants is to get out of combat duty. If he deliberately shirks his duty or runs away, of course he will be court-martialed. But if he becomes unable to fight further, then he gets out of combat on an honourable status. Thus a wound or injury is regarded, not as a misfortune, but a blessing. As one litter bearer put it, "Something funny about the men you bring back wounded, they're always happy . . . they're sure glad to be getting out of there." Under these circumstances it is easy for a man to become sincerely convinced that he is sick or unable to go on. This in turn leads to the premature development of genuine psychiatric disability and to needless loss of manpower. It also leads to self-inflicted wounds and to misbehaviour before the enemy.'

Treatment centres for CE were set up by several American divisions. These involved


I Pvt. Eddie I. Slovik *36896415
Confess to the Desertion of the United States Army. AT the Time of my Desertion We Were in ALbuff IN France. I Come to ALbuff as a Replacement. They Were Shilling The Town and we Were Told To dig IN For The Night The Flowing Morning They were Shilling us again. I was so Scared nerves and Trembling That at The Time The other Replacements moved OUT I Couldnt Move. I Stayed their IN my Fox hole Till it was Quite and I was able To move. I Then Walked IN Town. Not seeing any OF our Troops So I Stayed over night at a French hospital. The next Morning I Turned myself over to the Canadian Provost Corp. AFter being with them six Weeks I was Turned over To American M.P. They Turned me loose. I Told my Commanding officer My Story. I said that if I had To go OUT There again Id Run away. He said Their was nothing he Could do For me so I Ran away again AND Ill RUN AWAY AGAIN IF I HAVE To GO OUT There Again. 5555
Signed Pvt. Eddie D. Slovik
U.S.N. 36896415


BRODERICK'S FLOWERS, INC.
28 South Broadway, Yonkers, New York
Phone: Yonkers 3-6899
PX BRANCH No.
DATE:
FLOWER ORDER
Name Only
MESSAGE:
CARD FROM:
U.S. ARMY
OCCASION: BIRTHDAY GRADUATION ANNIVERSARY WEDDING SICK ROOM HOLIDAY SPECIAL
DATE TO BE DELIVERED:
ADDRESS:
DELIVER TO:
Signed:
PX SALES CLERK NAME:
ROSES CUT FLOWERS CORSAGES PLANTS
$10.
19900

The confession written on the back of a Post Exchange Flower Order Form in poor English. It was a damning piece of evidence

(Prosecution Exhibit No. 4 at the General Court-Martial) which eventually sealed Slovik's fate.

getting the affected men to the rear area, putting them to sleep for twenty-four hours followed by hot food. Then a programme of 'orientation' was begun under a chaplain, MO, the Red Cross and a special service officer after which the individual was asked to return to the front. Some did but for those that refused the minimum sentence they could expect was a dishonourable discharge or term of imprisonment and they also risked the firing squad.

In April 1945 the following observation was made concerning battlefield offenders:

'Soldiers who desert from the front or misbehave in battle fall generally into three classes: first, veteran soldiers (often wounded or hospitalized for combat fatigue) who feel they have done their share and refuse to return to the front; second, reinforcements who have never acquired unit esprit or become acclimatised to battle conditions; and, third, weaklings, morons and ne'er-do-wells who were never fitted for combat service. As to the first class, we certainly owe a duty to consider the service they have rendered; as to the others, the Army is often responsible for the way they have been handled and assigned. This does not excuse them, but all factors should be weighed in arriving at a just sentence.'

Under American military law, a potential deserter could be charged with 'straight' desertion under Article of War 58 or with absence without leave with intent to avoid hazardous duty or shirk important service under AoW 28. By October 31, 1945, a total of 2,024 personnel in the ETO had been charged under AoW 58 and 1,852 under AoW 28. Altogether 2,804 were found guilty, but in 923 cases the accused was found guilty of the lesser charge of absence without leave (AoW 61). In many instances, although the nature of the unauthorised absence indicated desertion, the offence was charged merely as absence without leave; either because admissable evidence of the necessary intent was unavailable or because the convening authority believed the ends of justice or the requirements of discipline would be adequately met without subjecting the accused to the severe penalties and moral stigma consequent upon a conviction of desertion in time of war.

In cases of desertion under AoW 58, prolonged absence of two months or more was relied upon to prove the intent that the accused intended to permanently remain absent.

One extreme case was Court-Martial, European Theater of Operations, 16290, Cohagen. The accused absented himself without leave in England on November 11, 1942 and remained away until he was apprehended in a pub in London on July 5, 1945 — an absence of nearly three years during which the war in Europe was fought and won. He testified he had originally overstayed his pass and, though he always intended to return, he was afraid to face the consequences. He remained for the most part in London and was never asked to show his pass until the time of his apprehension. He claimed he did not intend to desert the service. A finding of guilty of desertion was sustained.

When the period of desertion fell below two months the problem of proving intent became more acute. In the leading case of CM ETO 1629, O'Donnell, the accused remained absent without leave for thirty-seven days after the expiration of his pass. The offence occurred in England in the winter of 1944. The absence was terminated by his voluntary surrender, in uniform, to military police at a town but a two-hour train ride from the location of his unit. There was no evidence of what he did or where he went during his absence and he testified he could give no explanation for remaining away. The court found him guilty of desertion and the Judge Advocate General's Board of Review upheld the conviction on the grounds that an unexplained absence in an active theatre of operations under conditions generally prevailing at that time was sufficiently prolonged to justify the inference that at some time during this absence the accused intended not to return. The fact that he surrendered in uniform and possibly wore it throughout his absence was held to be without significance as it was well-known that a man of military age was safer from inquiry by the police if in uniform than if he wore civilian clothes.

Eddie Slovik's trial, held on the second floor of a public building in Rotgen, twenty miles south of Aachen, Germany on November 11, lasted exactly 100 minutes. He was then taken to the Paris Detention Barracks of the Seine Base Section located in the Caserne Mortier on Boulevard Mortier, taken over after five years' occupation by the Germans. (Old German documents were still being discovered in 1980.) Today the barracks are currently occupied by the 1st GERT of the French Army (J. P. Pallud).

Far more frequently, however, the finding of desertion did not rest upon proof of prolonged absence alone. There were numerous cases where the duration of the absence was comparatively negligible and the proof of intent depended upon the presence of other pertinent factors in varying combinations. Such factors, for example, were the commencement of the absence by escape from confinement, or breach of arrest pending the prosecution of other charges; or resorting to larceny, robbery, burglary, black-market operations and even civilian employment, to obtain means of subsistence. Absence begun with knowledge of imminent embarkation, or in the shadow of approaching combat, or in anticipation of assignment to a combat unit, was held to throw an unfavourable light upon the intent of the accused. Concealment of identity during the absence, travelling great distances, possession of forged passes and travel orders, living with civilians, leaving or attempting to leave the ETO, and resisting arrest when caught by the police, were all facts deemed admissible as evidence of intent. Rarely did persons accused of desertion admit they intended not to return.

The case of CM ETO 16108, Keeton and Lemme, was a clear example of intent to desert proved by circumstantial evidence. Both soldiers were convicted of desertion committed in Belgium during the later phases of the Battle of the Bulge. After leaving their organisation they went to Paris where, together with two other soldiers, they procured false orders from a printing shop and proceeded to London by air. In London they bought, again from a printing shop, orders which enabled them to return to New York by boat. While in Paris and London they stayed at American Red Cross Clubs. From New York they went to Springfield, Massachusetts, where they telephoned to their homes for money and later departed in several directions.

In CM ETO 17555, Brady, the accused made his way by boat from France via Le Havre to New York from whence he rejoined his wife in Philadelphia.

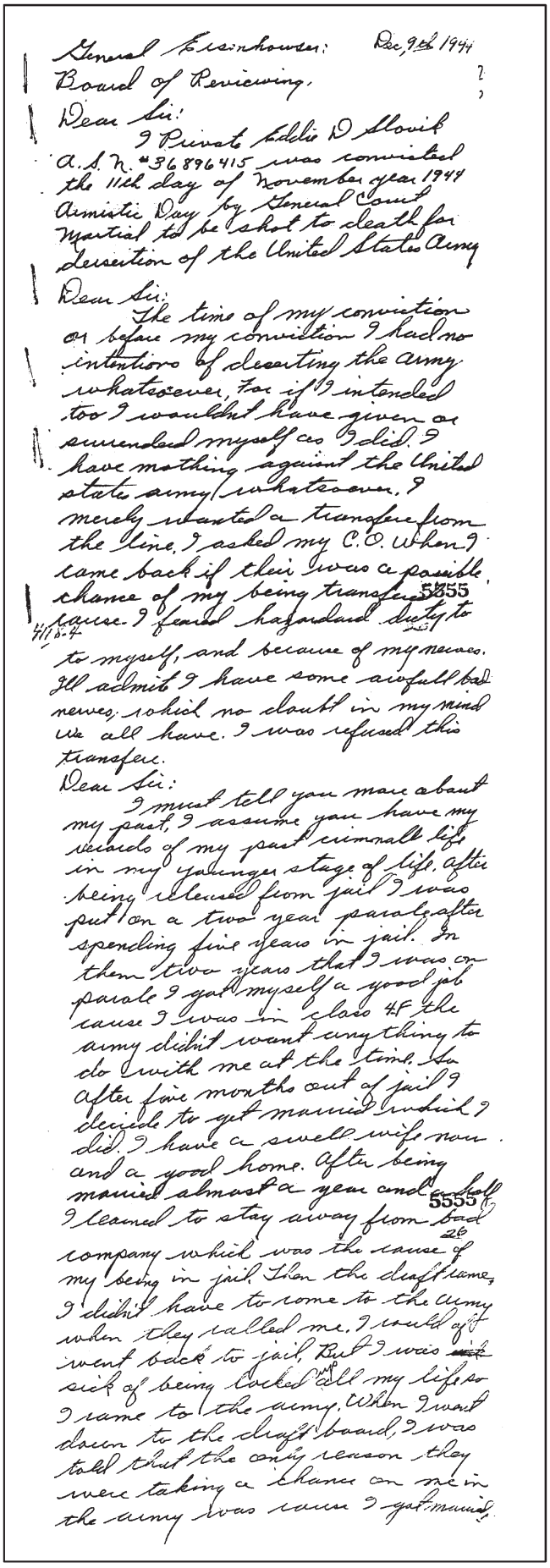
A more spectacular case was that of CM ETO 18159, Orem. This soldier absented himself without leave on the Continent and by using false travel orders proceeded by air from Brussels to London and from there to Washington. On the flight to America he shared the plane with several officers including a Brigadier General whose autograph he obtained. He was eventually apprehended in Baltimore and returned to Europe for trial. His conviction of desertion was upheld.

In CM ETO 15343, Deason, which arose in France, the soldier was absent for thirty-three days. When he was recognised in a cafe by agents of the Criminal Investigation Division he was wearing civilian clothes. He was subdued after a violent attempt to break away and was found to be in possession of a gun and 52,000 francs. During his absence, he had engaged in large-scale black-market operations with six other soldiers selling petrol stolen from the United States Army to French civilians. His share of the proceeds from such sales amounted to 214,000 francs. It was held that his conviction of desertion was warranted by the evidence.

Accused in CM ETO 952, Mosser, procured his means of subsistence during his absence by returning to his camp from time to time and stealing wallets from soldiers while they slept, by robbery, by 'pan-handling' from American soldiers, and by taking part of the earnings of prostitutes.

The remarkable ease with which deserters using stolen US Army vehicles procured petrol from dumps and passing convoys was evident in many cases and the vehicles themselves were occasionally repaired or otherwise serviced at military installations!

Possibly the shortest absence held to be desertion occurred in CM ETO 12045, Friedman. There the accused absented himself without leave for forty-five days, was caught, returned to his company and placed under arrest. On the following morning the company was preparing to move into combat. During the activity beforehand, he broke arrest and again absented himself without leave. He was apprehended two hours later several miles to the rear. This two-hour absence was held to constitute desertion. His acts and the time and place of their oc-



General Eisenhower: Dec, 9th 1944
Board of Reviewing.
Dear Sir:
I Private Eddie D Slovik A.S.N. #36896415 was convicted the 11th day of November year 1944 Armistic Day by General Court Martial to be shot to death for desertion of the United States Army
Dear Sir:
The time of my conviction or before my conviction I had no intentions of deserting the army whatsoever, for if I intended too I wouldnt have given or surrended myself as I did. I have nothing against the United states army whatsoever. I merely wanted a transfere from the line. I asked my C.O. when I came back if their was a possible chance of my being transfered 5555 cause. I feared hazardous duty to to myself, and because of my nerves. Ill admit I have some awfull bad nerves, which no doubt in my mind we all have. I was refused this transfere.
Dear Sir:
I must tell you more about my past, I assume you have my records of my past criminall life in my younger stage of life. after being released from jail I was put on a two year parole after spending five years in jail. In them two years that I was on parole I got myself a good job cause I was in class 4F the army didint want anything to do with me at the time. So after five months out of jail I decide to get married and did I did. I have a swell wife now and a good home. After being married almost a year and a half 5555 I learned to stay away from bad company which was the cause of my being in jail. Then the draft came, I didint have to come to the army when they called me. I could of went back to jail. But I was sick of being locked all my life so I came to the army. When I went down to the draft board, I was told that the only reason they were taking a chance on me in the army was cause I got married

and had a good record after being out of jail almost two years. In my knowledge sir I have a good record in the past two years, I also have a good record as a soldier up to the time I got in this trouble. I tried my best to do what the army wanted me to do till I first ran away or should I say left the company. 27
Dear Sir: 5555
I dont believe I ran away the first time as I stated in my first confession. I came over to France as a replacement, and when the enemy started to shelling us I got scared and nerves that I couldnt move out of my fox hole. I guess I never did give my self the chance to get over my first fear of shelling. The next day their wasnt any american troops around so I turned myself over to the Canadians M.P.s. They in turn were trying to get in touch with my outfit headquarters. I guess it must have taken them six weeks to catch up the american troops. Well sir, when I was turned over to my outfit I tried to explain to my C.O. just what took place, and what had happened to me. Then I asked for a transfer. Which was refused. Then I wrote my confession. I was then told that if I would go back on 28 5555 the line they would destroy my confession, however if I refused to go back on the line they would have to hold it against me which they did.
Dear Sir:
How can I tell you how humbley sorry I am for the sins I've comitted. I didint realize at the time what I was doing, or what the word desertion meant. What it is like to be condemned to die. I beg of you deeply and sincerly for the sake of my dear wife and mother back home to have mercy on me. To my knowledge I have a good record since my marriage and as a soldier. I'd like to continue to be a good soldier.
Anxiously awaiting your reply, which I earnestly pray is favorable. God bless you and in your work to victory.
I Remain Yours For
Victory
29 5555
Pvt. Eddie D Slovik

Although sentenced to death, there were many legal processes to be exhausted before such a penalty could be carried out. Slovik wrote this letter pleading for clemency directly to General Eisenhower. He never saw it personally.

currence demonstrated clearly his intention to desert the military service.

Desertion with intent to avoid hazardous duty or shirk important service under Article of War 28 was a fairly recent addition to American military law having been introduced in 1920. Consequently there was little case law available to provide guidelines when alleged deserters were brought to trial during WWII. It was held that the language in AoW 28 clearly required the specific intent to exist at the time the accused quit his organisation or place of duty.

In CM ETO 10363, Mangiapane, an officer, a bombardier, was ordered to participate in a combat mission over Germany. He attended the briefing and later assumed his position in the plane. While his pilot was preparing to take off he abandoned his post and left the aircraft, thus preventing his participation in the mission. It was held that his abandonment of his post on the plane on the threshold of its mission sufficiently established the fact that he quit his place of duty with intent to avoid the hazards of a combat flight. The conviction of desertion was sustained.

In some cases the intent which actuated the absence was brought to light, not only by the conduct of the accused and the facts surrounding his absence, but also by his own statements. In the Pettapiece case (CM ETO 1406), the platoon leader informed him that they were about to go into combat. Pettapiece thereupon stated that he would not make another amphibious landing and that he thought he had done his part in the war and deserved a 'break'. After he made the statement he absented himself without leave. His conviction of desertion was sustained.

In CM ETO 4138, Urban, the accused was top-turret gunner and flight engineer in a bomber crew based in England. After his return from a mission over Germany, where his plane had encountered intensive flak and received direct hits, he made repeated statements to members of the crew to the effect that he intended to quit flying and that the mission from which he had just returned would be his last. That same day, while his crew was still in a combat operational status and subject to be called upon to fly on any mission, he absented himself without leave and remained away for six days. During his absence his crew flew on a combat mission to Belgium, then occupied by the enemy. It was held that the intent to avoid hazardous duty was proved.

An unusual story of heroism followed by an alleged desertion is found in CM ETO 11693,

'The power to exercise clemency is a trust; it is not to be granted as a matter of course in any class of cases, but its exercise should depend upon the facts and considerations of military discipline. The record of the accused in civil life indicates that between 1932 and 1938 he was convicted five times by the Juvenile Court of Detroit for four offenses of breaking and entering and for one instance of assault and battery. In each case he was placed on parole. In 1937 he was sentenced to six months to ten years for embezzlement, and in 1939 he was again confined for unlawfully driving away an automobile. The report of the Federal Bureau of Investigation attached to the record does not indicate how much time the accused actually served either in the reformatory or in the State prison, but his own letter requesting clemency states that he was in jail five years. He was released from parole to be inducted into the military service. These prior offenses are not of sufficient gravity to influence my recommendation in the instant case. However, they indicate a persistent refusal to conform to the rules of society in civilian life, an imperviousness to penal correction and a total lack of appreciation of clemency; these qualities the accused brought with him into his military life. He was obstinately determined not to engage in combat, and on two occasions, the second after express warning as to the results, he deserted. He boldy confessed to these offenses and concluded his confession with the statement, ''so I ran away again AND ILL RUN AWAY AGAIN IF I HAVE TO GO OUT THEIR.'' There can be no doubt that he deliberately decided that confinement was preferable to the risks of combat, and that he deliberately sought the safety and comparative comfort of the guardhouse. To him and to those soldiers who may follow his example, if he achieves his end, confinement is neither deterrent nor punishment. He has directly challenged the authority of the government, and future discipline depends upon a resolute reply to this challenge. If the death penalty is ever to be imposed for desertion it should be imposed in this case, not as a punitive measure nor as retribution, but to maintain that discipline upon which alone an army can succeed against the enemy. There was no recommendation for clemency in this case and none is here recommended.' So wrote Major Frederick J. Bertolet, one of the nine reviewing officers in the military justice section of the Judge Advocate General. This was the first of two reviews of the Slovik trial conducted by the Paris office of the JAG which was located on the top floor of the Hotel Majestic in Avenue Kleber. The building had been taken over as the chief building housing ETOUSA (European Theater of Operations, United States Army). It was purchased by the French government in 1938 and after the war it became an office for French radio and television and then for UNESCO. Today it is the closely-guarded Centre International de Conference used by the French Foreign office for high-level conferences (J. P. Pallud).

Parke. Although the accused had been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the order announcing the award was revoked to make way for a recommendation for the award of the Congressional Medal of Honor. Yet in connection with a subsequent engagement he was charged with and found guilty of desertion by absenting himself without leave for the purpose of avoiding action with the enemy.

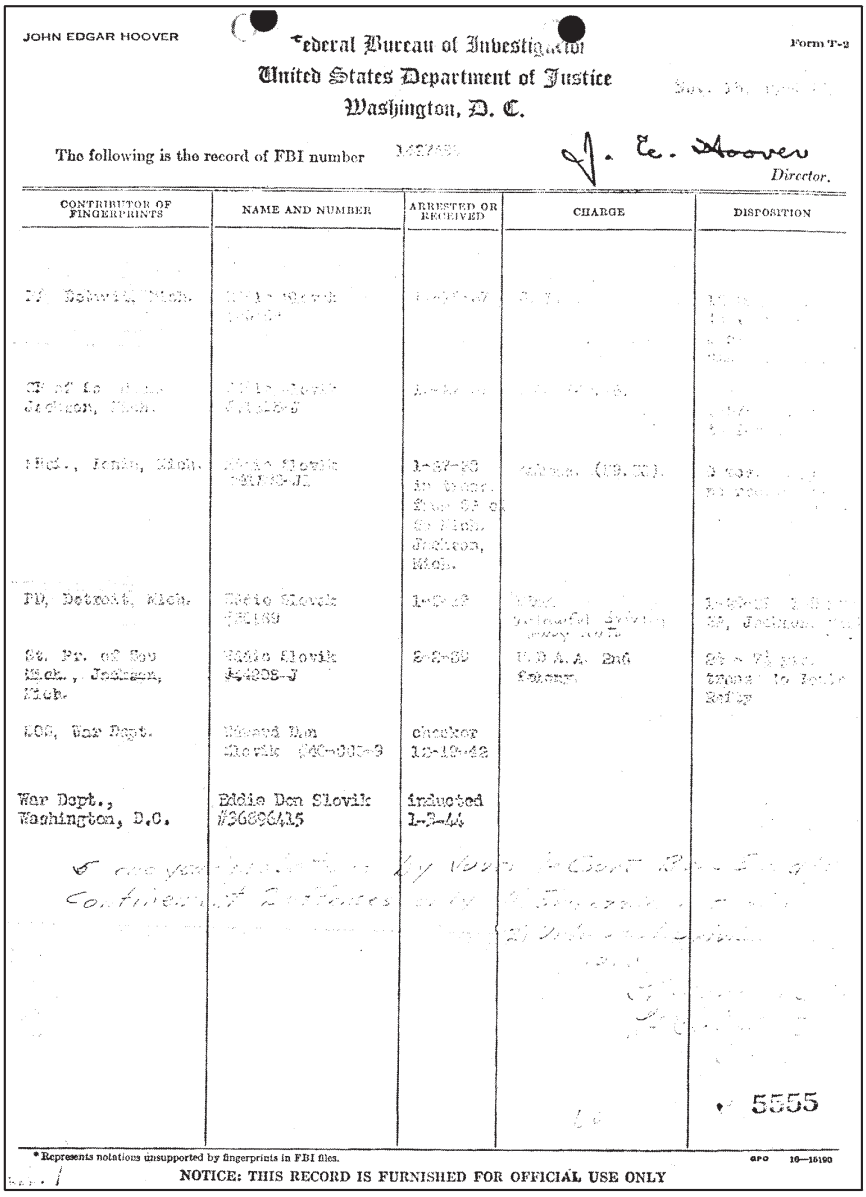
There were many cases where an accused admitted he left his organisation or place of duty because he could not stand combat any longer. In CM ETO 5293, Killen, the accused and his company had been engaged in active, arduous and continuous combat. During a temporary halt for the reorganisation of the company he was sent out on patrol. Encountering enemy fire, he absented himself without leave for a protracted period. He later stated that: 'I left because I just couldn't take the shelling any more. I do not believe that I could go up and take it again.' In CM ETO 8028, Burtis, the accused was ordered to go out on a reconnaissance patrol with the probability of an encounter with the enemy. He left his unit without authority. He stated he had previously asked to be relieved for a couple of days because he 'couldn't take any more' but his request had been refused.

There was also a class of cases, exemplified by CM ETO 11006, Mazzeo, in which men were alleged to have absented themselves without leave when being returned to their combat units after hospitalisation for wounds. In this case, Mazzeo was wounded and evacuated to a hospital. Upon his discharge he was returned to his regiment for duty. He was billeted overnight in the town where the regimental headquarters were situated, before he was to rejoin his company the next day. When morning came he was nowhere to be seen and, during his absence, his company engaged the enemy. The evidence was held sufficient to prove the offence of desertion.

Altogether between July 18, 1942 and October 31, 1945, out of the total number of 22,214 American General Courts-Martial in the ETO during this period, desertion averaged 3.16 cases per month in the 63 line divisions. The infantry (43 divisions) suffered 2,277 cases; armoured units (16) 196 and the four airborne divisions 48. Some 80 per cent of all these cases ended in convictions with another 16 per cent being found guilty of the lesser charge of AWOL. (It is interesting to note that while 21 per cent of the armoured division cases were so treated, only 11 per cent of the infantry division courts-martial were reduced to the lesser charge.) The 3rd Infantry suffered the highest number of cases and the 8th Armoured Division the least. Death sentences were given in 130 cases but only carried out in one instance — that of Private Eddie Slovik, 36896415 of Company G, 109th Infantry, 28th Infantry Division.

The 28th is one of America's most illustrious. Its first elements were organised by Benjamin Franklin in the American Revolution (just called the 'Revolution' by Americans) and units from the division have served in every war in which the United States has been engaged. During the Second World War, between August 1944 and August 1945 the division suffered 26,286 casualties of which 3,266 were battle deaths. On August 29, 1944, the division had received the honour of being singled out to parade through Paris *(see After the Battle No. 14)* en route for the Siegfried Line. Four months later it was holding a twenty-five mile front in Luxembourg when it was attacked in the last German offensive.

The 28th was commanded by the tough D-Day veteran — Brigadier General Norman D. Cota. It was 'Dutch' Cota who was subsequently immortalised in books and films by his cry on Omaha's Dog White beach: 'There are only two kinds of Americans on this beach — dead ones and those who will soon be dead



JOHN EDGAR HOOVER

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Form T-2

United States Department of Justice

Washington, D. C.

The following is the record of FBI number

J. Edgar Hoover

Director.

CONTRIBUTOR OF FINGERPRINTS	NAME AND NUMBER	ARRESTED OR RECEIVED	CHARGE	DISPOSITION
PD, Detroit, Mich.	Eddie Slovik [illegible]	1-27-43	[illegible]	[illegible]
CO, 2d Bn, 109th Inf., Jackson, Mich.	Eddie Slovik [illegible]	1-27-43	[illegible]	[illegible]
PD, Detroit, Mich.	Eddie Slovik [illegible]	1-27-43	[illegible]	[illegible]
CO, Pr. of Bn Mich., Jackson, Mich.	Eddie Slovik 36,896,415	8-8-44	U.S.A.A. 2nd Lieut.	[illegible]
AGO, War Dept.	Edward Don Slovik [illegible]	Checked 12-19-42		
War Dept., Washington, D.C.	Eddie Don Slovik #36896415	Inducted 1-2-44		

5555

*Represents notations unsupported by fingerprints in FBI files.

NOTICE: THIS RECORD IS FURNISHED FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

GPO 16—16190

The faded document from FBI files referred to in Major Bertolet's report. His review was fully approved by the Judge Advocate General, Brigadier-General Ed. C. Betts, who countersigned it on December 23.

unless we move forward. So we move!' General Cota was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions on June 6 and later the Silver Star for gallantry and the Purple Heart for wounds while with the 29th Division at St. Lo.

Private Slovik's regiment, the 109th, was led by another D-Day hero — none other than Lieutenant Colonel James E. Rudder who had also achieved a fearsome reputation in June 1944 by commanding two Ranger Battalions landing at the Pointe du Hoc *(see After the Battle No. 1)* where he was wounded three times, refused to be evacuated and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

After the arrest of Private Slovik on October 9, 1944, he was held in the 109th Regimental Prisoner of War Enclosure. On October 19 charges were preferred against him and on the 26th Slovik was offered an unofficial deal by Lieutenant Colonel Henry P. Sommer, the Division Judge Advocate, whereby he could escape court-martial if he agreed to return to the front line. This Slovik refused and he was sent to Rotgen for trial on Armistice Day.

Uncontradicted evidence for the prosecution, taken from the court records, showed substantially the following:

Sometime after July 25, 1944, Slovik left Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, as a member of a group of replacements. The group proceeded via England to Omaha Beach, then to 'a couple of different places' and thereafter to the Third Replacement Depot in France where he was assigned to the 28th Infantry Division. On August 25, the group went to the division headquarters and Slovik, together with fourteen other replacements, was assigned to Company G, 109th Infantry. At division headquarters an officer gave the group an orientation lecture and ammunition was issued to them.

On the same day, according to the testimony of one of their number, Private George W. Thompson, the group entrucked at division headquarters for Company G, then located at Elbeuf, approximately sixty miles north-west of Paris on the River Seine. En route, the replacements including Slovik 'saw some damage, some burned out vehicles and shelled places', but saw no action. After proceeding for about two or three hours they stopped at what was apparently a rest area, left their packs, and continued on the trucks to the outskirts of Elbeuf, where they detrucked. After moving along the edge of the city they reached an open space where they 'dug in' at about 11.00 p.m. Thompson saw

Slovik with the group at this time. Between 11.00 p.m. and 11.30 p.m. the replacements, including the accused, entered the city to join Company G. There were 'a lot of troop movements and shelling' and 'it took quite a while because there was a lot of confusion. We moved around some but stayed close together so none of us would get lost'. Thompson confirmed that Slovik was at Elbeuf with the group at about 1.00 a.m. on August 26 because he knew and recognised his voice. This was the last time he 'saw' him, however, and so far as he knew, Slovik was not present for duty with his company at any time thereafter. The company remained at Elbeuf on August 26 until Canadian troops took over and it then proceeded through Paris, Belgium and Luxembourg to the Siegfried line. During its progress, occasional enemy action was encountered and, up to the trial, the company was more or less in constant action.

Captain Ralph O. Grotte, company commander of Company G, 109th Infantry, testified that at the time of the trial he had been in command for six weeks and that Slovik physically joined Company G on October 8 when it was reorganising and not in contact with the enemy. Slovik 'had been absent without leave and had been returned to me through the battalion'. Captain Grotte stated that he never granted Slovik permission to be absent and no permission was requested. Grotte said that Slovik was never present with the company for duty except on October 8 for one or two hours. On that day, a battalion sergeant major brought him to the company command post where he assigned him to the 4th platoon, turned him over to the platoon leader and forbade him to leave the company area unless he had permission from himself. The platoon leader conducted Slovik to his platoon and introduced him to his squad leader. Thereafter Slovik approached Captain Grotte and inquired of him if could be tried for being absent without leave. Grotte told him he would find out and caused him to be returned to his platoon area where Grotte directed him to stay. About an hour later Slovik asked Grotte 'If I leave now will it be desertion?' and Grotte replied that it would be. Slovik then left and thereafter he was not seen in the company nor was he present with the company for duty.

At about 8.30 a.m. on October 9, Slovik came to the Military Government Detachment, 112th Infantry, which since the preceding day was located at Rocherath, Belgium, and handed a cook a green slip of paper stating that this was a confession. The cook informed his commanding officer, Second Lieutenant Thomas F. Griffin, who telephoned the S-1 of the 109th Infantry and requested that someone call for Slovik. At about 12.30-12.45 p.m., a sergeant arrived and drove Slovik back to the orderly room of the 109th Infantry where he handed the green slip of paper to the temporary military police officer, First Lieutenant Wayne L. Hurd. The latter testified that he read the slip and directed the sergeant to deliver the accused to the military police for temporary custody. Hurd then took the slip first to the adjutant and then to Lieutenant Colonel Ross C. Henbest. Subsequently on the same day Slovik signed the slip in the presence of Hurd and Henbest, both of whom also signed as witnesses. (The green slip of paper, a US Army Post Exchange flower order form, with writing in ink on each side, was admitted in evidence as Prosecution Exhibit 4.) The defence stated it had no objections to the admission of the exhibit which reads as follows:

(Handprinted in ink with errors of spelling)

'I Pvt. Eddie D. Slovik 36896415 confess to

November 9, 1944 and General Eisenhower confers with Major General Norman D. Cota. The Commanding General of the 28th Infantry Division to which Slovik's unit belonged had approved the execution on November 27 although, as the result of an interview with William Bradford Huie in 1953, it would seem the General deleted the 'dishonourable discharge and forfeitures' part of the sentence to try to favour the next of kin who would otherwise lose all pay and insurance. Cota stated: 'I can't honestly assert that I was surprised by the action of the theatre commander. After I approved the sentence, I thought the accused would ultimately be shot. I'll admit I was surprised — maybe a little irritated — at first when I learned that the theatre commander was sending the soldier up for me to shoot. I had thought the execution would be performed back at the Disciplinary Training Center, where many of the murderers and rapists were executed. But as soon as I thought it over, I conceded the logic in the theatre commander's action: a deserter should be shot by the outfit he deserts.' (US Army).

HEADQUARTERS, 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 28, U. S. ARMY
27 November 1944

In the foregoing case of Private Eddie D. Slovik, 36896415, Company G, 109th Infantry, only so much of the sentence as provides that the accused be shot to death with musketry is approved and the Record of Trial forwarded for action under Article of War 48.

Norman D. Cota

NORMAN D. COTA
Major General, U.S.A.
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES ARMY

In the foregoing case of:

Private Eddie D. Slovik, 36896415,

Company G, 109th Infantry,

the sentence, as approved, is confirmed. Pursuant to Article of War 50½, the order directing the execution of the sentence is withheld.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
General
United States Army
Commanding.

23 December 1944.

the Desertion of the United States Army. At the time of my Desertion we were in Albuff in France. I come to Albuff as a Replacement. They were shilling the town and we were told to dig in for the night The flowing morning they were shilling us again. I was so scared nerves and trembling that at the time the other Replacements moved out I couldn't move. I stayed their in my fox hole till it was quite and I was able to move. I then walked in town. Not seeing any of our Troops so I stayed over night at a French hospital. The next morning I turned myself over to the Canadian Provost Corp. After being with them six weeks I was turned over to American M.P. They turned me lose. I told my commanding officer my story. I said that if I had to go out their again I'd run away. He said their was nothing he could do for me so I ran away again AND I'LL RUN AWAY AGAIN IF I HAVE TO GO OUT THEIR.

Signed Pvt. Eddie D. Slovik
A.S.N. 36896415

After Private Slovik was found guilty he was confined in the Seine Base Section stockade in Paris. On November 27 Brigadier General Cota approved the sentence of death only and the penalties of dishonourable discharge and forfeiture of pay were deleted. When interviewed after the war, the General stated that 'Given the situation as I knew it in November 1944, I thought it was my duty to this country to approve that sentence. If I hadn't approved it — if I had let Slovik accomplish his purpose — then I don't know how I could have gone up to the line and looked a good soldier in the face.'

What was unusual was that General Cota decided to have Slovik brought back to the 28th Division so that the sentence could be carried out in view of and by his own unit. (By that stage of the war, executions were normally carried out at Disciplinary Training Centres — usually civilian prisons taken over by the military.)

On December 9, Slovik sent a letter to General Eisenhower, Supreme Theater Commander, pleading for clemency and a Board of Review was convened to examine the legality and jurisdiction and conduct of the court-martial and its verdict. On January 6, the Assistant Judge Advocate General, Brigadier General E. C. McNeil, reported to General Eisenhower that:

'This is the first death sentence for desertion which has reached me for examination. It is probably the first of the kind in the American Army for over eighty years — there were none in World War I. In this case, the extreme penalty of death appears warranted. This soldier had performed no front line duty. He did not intend to. He deserted from his group of fifteen when about to join the infantry company to which he had been assigned. His subsequent conduct shows a deliberate plan to secure trial and incarceration in a safe place. The sentence adjudged was more severe than he had anticipated, but the imposition of a less severe sentence would only have accomplished the accused's purpose of securing his incarceration and consequent freedom from the dangers which so many of our armed forces are required to face daily. His unfavorable civilian record indicates that he is not a worthy subject of clemency.'

General McNeil finally stated that accordingly, under the provision of Article of War 50½, you now have authority to order execution of the sentence.

On January 23, 1945, General Eisenhower ordered the execution and, seven days later, a four-man MP detail collected Private Slovik from the Caserne Mortier in Paris in a weapons carrier and took him on the 200-odd-mile journey to the 109th Regiment, then billeted in the little town of St. Marie-aux-Mines nestling in a valley in the Vosges mountains, some fifteen miles north-west of Colmar in south-eastern France.

C O N F I D E N T I A L

(GCMO 27, 23 Jan 1945, contd)

"HEADQUARTERS, 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 28, U. S. ARMY
27 November 1944

In the foregoing case of Private Eddie D. Slovik, 36896415, Company G, 109th Infantry, only so much of the sentence as provides that the accused be shot to death with musketry is approved and the Record of Trial forwarded for action under Article of War 48.

s/ Norman D. Cota
t/ NORMAN D. COTA
Major General, U.S.A.
Commanding.

27 JAN 1945

The action of the confirming authority is:

"HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES ARMY

In the foregoing case of:
Private Eddie D. Slovik, 36896415,
Company G, 109th Infantry,
the sentence, as approved, is confirmed. Pursuant to Article of War 50½, the order directing the execution of the sentence is withheld.

Record of trial examined by the Board of Review with the concurrence of the Assistant Judge Advocate General, Branch Office of TJAG with ETO and found legally sufficient to support the sentence.

.....
Chairman, Board of Review

s/ Dwight D. Eisenhower
t/ DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
General
United States Army
Commanding.

23 December 1944."

The sentence having been modified and approved by the convening authority, confirmed by the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, and Article of War 50½ having been complied with, will be carried into execution on 31 January 1945, at 109th Infantry Area, France.

The act of execution will be under the direction of the Provost Marshal, 28th Infantry Division.
(CM ETO 5555)

By command of General EISENHOWER:

R. B. LORD,
Major General, GSC, Deputy Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

R. B. LOVETT,
Brigadier General, USA, Adjutant General.

DISTRIBUTION: M
(Special)

C O N F I D E N T I A L

- 2 -

There was one further review — the one to ensure that Article of War 50½ had been fully satisfied. This Board of Review had the duty of establishing that the record of the trial was legally sufficient to support the verdict and the sentence. This it did on January 6 enabling the execution to go ahead.

The 28th Division, then preparing for the Colmar offensive, received the order to prepare for the execution on January 24 and the division's Provost Marshal, Major William Fellman, was to be in charge.

A search was made in the surrounding area for the best site for the execution. In early American executions in France involving the rape or murder of civilians, it was not unusual for a location to be selected in the town or village where the crime had been committed in order to accommodate the maximum number of local witnesses to prove that justice had been done. In this case, however, it was decided that the execution must be kept secret from French civilians and a large house was chosen on the south-western outskirts of the village, beside the D48 road, which had a garden enclosed by a 7½-foot masonry wall. The house was requisitioned and the occupants of No. 86 Rue de General Bourgeois told to vacate the premises on January 29.

On the morning of January 30, a detachment from the divisional engineers moved in to construct a wooden stop butt to avoid ricochets from the stone wall and to erect a six by six inch post, six foot high, to which the prisoner was to be secured. They also constructed a board with straps to be used to support Slovik in an upright position should he faint or be unable to stand. (A chair was used for similar reasons in the only British execution by firing squad — see *After the Battle* No. 11.) Paths were also dug in the knee-deep snow for the firing squad and the witnesses. Thirty-three enlisted men and at least twenty-five officers were to witness the execution for maximum deterrent value. General Cota had already named the twelve men who were to comprise the firing squad, all of whom had been hand-picked by Colonel Rudder as being expert riflemen. All three battalions of the 109th were represented.

On the afternoon of the 29th, the firing squad were transported to the site chosen for the execution. General Cota personally addressed the group on the morning of January 30 before a dress rehearsal was conducted in the garden that afternoon. The provision of a white target marker on Slovik's chest was considered unnecessary in view of the expertise of the soldiers chosen. They were also

told that one of the M-1 Garand rifles to be used would be loaded with a blank round although this seems to have been an insult to the intelligence of the men concerned as the non-ejection of the spent cartridge case and lack of recoil would be immediately obvious to those present.

The vehicle bringing Slovik from Paris was due to arrive at St. Marie on the evening of January 30 but, due to a severe snowstorm throughout eastern France all that night, the escort party did not arrive until 7.30 a.m. the following morning, January 31. During the long journey, the key to Slovik's handcuffs had been lost and these had to be cut off with a hacksaw when he arrived.

The previous evening, the eve of the launch of the Battle of the Colmar Pocket, Lieutenant General Frank W. 'Shrimp' Milburn, commanding XXI Corps, invited the Generals under his command to his temporary quarters in a requisitioned chateau in St. Marie. Only two of those present for dinner that night were not Generals — Lieutenant Colonel Henry Cabot Lodge (a former and future US Senator and United Nations Ambassador) and Colonel Edward L. R. Elson, Division Chaplain, and it is to the Reverend Elson (Chaplain to the United States Senate since 1969) that we are indebted to reproduce here for the first time his complete account written on the evening of January 31, 1945.

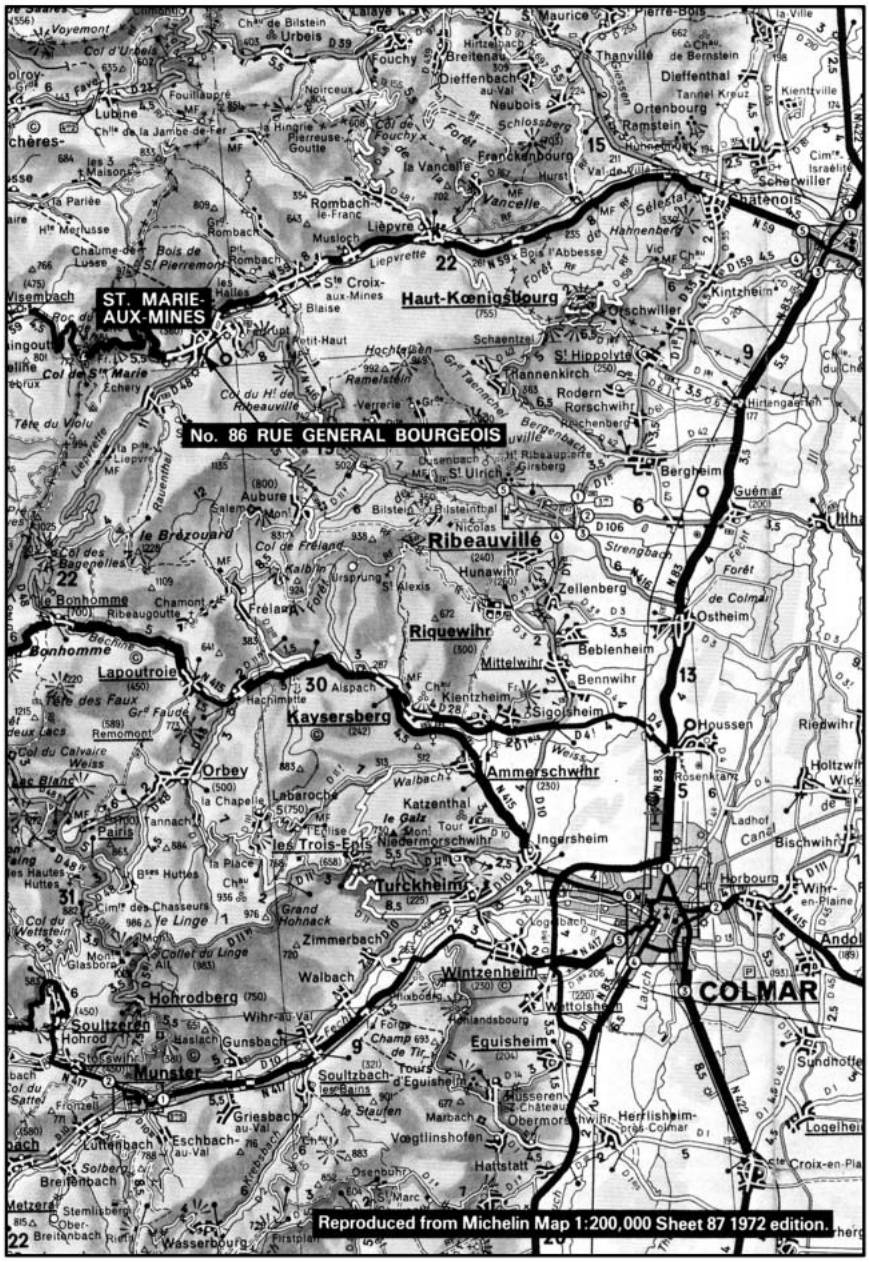
'When I arrived at the dinner, I had no hint of the assignment which would be mine before the evening was ended. When the dinner was over, the officers rose from the table and visited in the large salon in groups of two's and three's. General Milburn drew me aside and said, "Chaplain, tomorrow morning the 28th Infantry Division is executing a soldier by firing squad for desertion. This is the first firing squad execution since our Civil War. I must give my full attention to the battle which begins tomorrow or I would attend. I wish you would attend as my personal representative and give me a full report when it is over and you can reach the Command Post. This is VOCG."

'Thus, under VOCG — vocal orders of my commanding general — and as his official representative (and not in my capacity as a ministering chaplain), I witnessed one of the most historic events in the long years since we have had an Army of the United States. When the grueling ordeal was over and night had fallen once more, by candlelight and seated at a field desk, I wrote an account of what I had witnessed. Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Ralph J. Smith, the 3rd Division chaplain who had stood beside me at the execution, tossed his bed-roll beside me and we talked about the day's main event through the late hours of night and far into the morning.

'I had written my own narrative earlier that evening for two reasons. First, acting on a sound psychological principle, by writing a description of what I had seen, I would thus exteriorize any inward burden and harrassment of memory and secondly, since it was known at the time to be the first execution by firing squad since the War Between The States, it was certain to have unusual meaning in the history of World War II. For me it evoked deep reflection. As it has turned out, the narrative I set forth on that evening of January 31, 1945, appears to be the only unofficial account by an on-the-spot eye witness. This then is in substance what I wrote:

'At 0900 hours, in company with Lieutenant Colonel William H. Ellsworth, Judge Advocate, and Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Ralph J. Smith, Chaplain (Major) Lloyd E. Langford and Captain James W. Taylor, Assistant G1 (all of the 3rd Infantry Division), I traveled in a command car about three-quarters-of-a-mile up a narrow road to the site of the ceremony on the edge of the town.

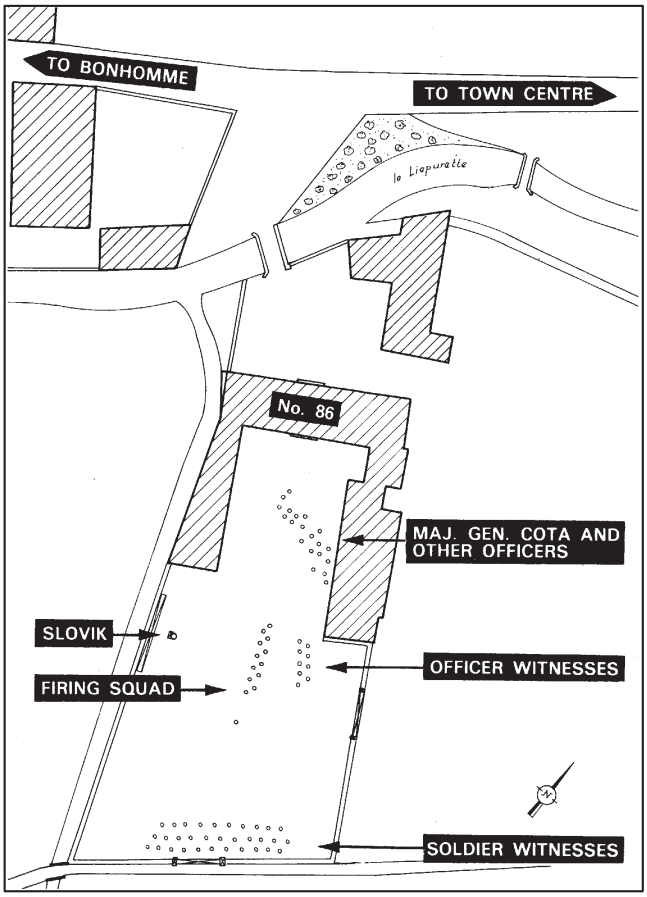
'The place selected, 86 Rue de General

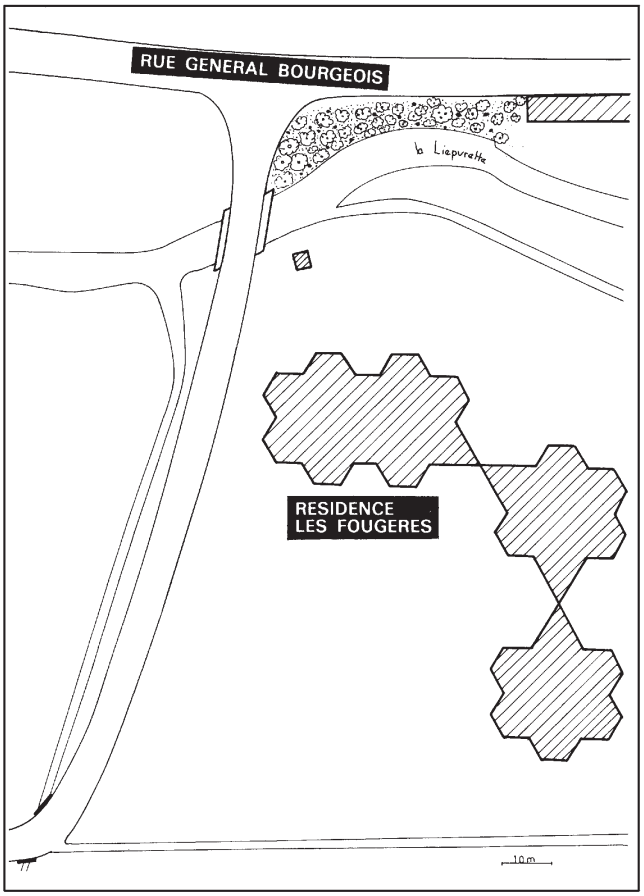


Bourgeois, was quite like the descriptions in fiction stories and historic accounts I had read. A very large and well-kept three-storied gray house with orange shutters and tile roof, rested at the foot of one of the Vosges Mountains. A mountain stream flowed past the walled garden, winding its way thence through the centre of the town. The approach to the house was accomplished by a bridge about thirty feet long which spanned the stream and reminded me of an ancient moat. Dismounting from our vehicles at the bridge, we walked across the span to the high iron gates which formed the entrance to the front yard — a yard which in springtime must have been resplendent with beautiful gardens. Here we were halted by military police who admitted us, one at a time, checking carefully the name, rank, serial number and organization of each officer. We then walked up the short distance to the front door where another MP admitted us to a large reception room in the center of the house. Here we waited until the ceremony began.

'Within, the waiting atmosphere was grave and realistic in the awareness that, only a few miles beyond us at the front, men are killing and being killed, that this is war and we are soldiers. The officers visited in little groups and MPs were entering and leaving from various doors. The Judge Advocate of the 28th Division, in charge of the execution, carried a small package which in a few minutes revealed a piece of black cloth and some nylon rope.

'Presently Major General Norman D. "Dutch" Cota, Commander of the 28th Infantry Division, arrived accompanied by several other officers. He carried a swagger stick with brass handle. He remained covered, taking a position generally in the center of the room, and nodding formally to several of the officers. On seeing me, he said, "Good morning, Colonel". As my collar was buttoned and my helmet was in my hand, he could not see my cross in either place. At this salutation, I walked from behind several officers and presented myself to him as the Corps Chaplain. General Cota immediately remarked that he needed five chaplain relacements, four of his chaplains having been wounded or missing in action in the von Rundstedt breakthrough up north and another being hospitalized due to wounds. I assured him that replacements would be assigned just as soon as they were available to the corps. Two are to be on the way tomorrow. We exchanged several other comments and the General then withdrew through the opposite door from that by which he entered. Soon he re-entered the room and stood alone





The 28th Division's provost marshal was detailed to take charge of the execution: 'The following facts influenced our selecting No. 86 Rue de General Dourgeois (sic): The location was not adjacent to any town activity. A very important factor was that a stone wall approximately 7 ½' high surrounded the property. The property was secured via Military Government. The occupants did not know for what purpose it was to be used. The occupants were asked to vacate the premises two days prior to the execution as were occupants of any of the nearby properties that commanded a view of the scene of execution. A security guard was established 24 hours prior to the execution, and all possible points of view were cut off to both civilian and military personnel. Both prior to the execution and afterwards the entire matter was kept from the civilian populace.' The house was demolished in the 1960s but Jean Paul Pallud, who visited St. Marie for us, has indicated with the overlay *below* exactly where it stood.

while the other officers continued their conversations in small groups.

'The courtyard where the ceremony took place was at the back of the house next to the mountain. There had been heavy snow storms for several days and a deep snow covered the mountains and valley in which the town nestled. Although the heavy snow prevented a clear picture, I gathered the impression that this was a formal garden surrounded by a high gray stone wall. Areas had been cleared of snow where personnel would walk and stand during the ceremony. As we came out into the courtyard, we saw on our right the place where the prisoner was to stand. In front of the wall, there had been erected a heavy square stake or post of fresh unpainted wood about nine inches square. A board wall had been constructed behind this stake and in front of the stone wall to prevent the ricochet of bullets. Directly opposite the stake and at some distance from it an area cleared of snow had been prepared for the firing squad and officer witnesses. To the left of this area, on the flank facing the stake, was another snow-cleared area for the enlisted witnesses.

'At a few minutes before 1000 hours, the Provost Marshal directed that the enlisted men witnesses move out of the house into the yard. The soldiers came from various components of the 28th Division. They marched with military dispatch and took a position facing toward the door of the house. Then the officers were directed to take their assigned post. As senior officer in this group, my position was on the right of the front file directly facing the stake, there being two files of officers — about eight or ten in all. In several minutes, General Cota and several other officers informally walked out of the house into the courtyard and stood just outside the door, a considerable distance to our right. The morning was gray, slightly overcast, and warmer than it had been for several days. We expected it to snow, perhaps rain, and I thought how magnificent the scenery was and how beautiful the day!

'But I did not have long to survey the scenery. Soon we heard the command, "Attention" crisply given by the General who saw the officiating party just emerging from the doorway. Everyone came to attention and there was an atmosphere of solemn dignity. Through the door came the small party of officiating personnel in a column of two's except the prisoner who walked alone. There were MPs, the Provost Marshal, the Judge Advocate, Slovik, and the Chaplain (Captain) Carl P. Cummings who attended the condemned man in his last hours. The last MPs carried the collapse board, the purpose of which was to support the condemned if he proved unable to stand before the firing squad. The prisoner's hands had been tied behind his back and he walked with slow but steady pace. The column made a right turn toward the stake. A few steps, and the march ended. The prisoner was placed in front of the post, facing us.

'The Provost Marshal then read in a clear, crisp military manner the sentence of the court-martial, the reviewing actions by higher authorities, and the order directing the execution. Slovik had been found guilty of deserting the army in the face of the enemy with intent to avoid hazardous duty, and the sentence directed that he should be "shot until dead". During the reading, Slovik looked up into the sky and his lips moved in prayer. The reading completed, the Judge Advocate stepped to the prisoner, accompanied by a stenographer and — as is required — asked Slovik if he had a final statement to make. To this Slovik answered, "No". Immediately thereafter, again according to custom, Chaplain Cummings approached the prisoner and asked if he had a final statement to make to him as a priest of his church and chaplain of his regiment. To this there was also a negative reply.

Above: **Our photographs of No. 86 Rue General Bourgeois were ferreted out by Jean Paul and we believe it is the first time a picture of the house has been published. This was the front entrance. The stream runs beneath the bridge in the foreground and, except for the missing snow, it must have looked very similar when Reverend Elson was there.** *Below:* **With the historic house demolished only the bridge remains, although even that has been rebuilt. (Jean Paul is indebted to Hobert Lohner, who supplied the photographs, and Gilles Ambert for help with plans.)**

This would have been Reverend Elson's view of the proceedings from a position a few paces behind the firing squad (H. Lohner).

Above: **The spot where Slovik died. This is the wall in front of which the anti-ricochet stop butt was constructed (H. Lohner).**

'Upon the conclusion of these legal requirements, the MPs completed the physical preparation. Tapes were drawn over the prisoner's shoulders, another about his knees, and another across his feet to secure him to the stake. Then the black hood was placed over his head. Chaplain Cummings stepped beside Slovik and began to pray. During the prayer, the firing squad of riflemen and a sergeant from Slovik's own regiment marched from behind the house, halted, did a right face and took a post directly in front of us, facing the prisoner. Chaplain Cummings slowly withdrew, continuing his prayer as he walked. Then there was the order to carry out the execution. "Ready! Aim! Fire!" There was a crisp crack — an almost simultaneous discharge of the rifles. The black-hooded head dropped on the chest. The doctors, three of them, went forward and one by one examined the body with stethoscope and fingers. During this examination, which was the longest part of the ceremony, an MP lieutenant passed behind the members of the firing squad, taking each rifle and placing another round of ammunition in the rifles so that if necessary another volley could be fired. During the process of reloading, the lieutenant inadvertently pointed a rifle in the direction of the group of enlisted witnesses. I called to him in a subdued voice, "Be careful, lieutenant, where you point those rifles. One death this morning is enough".

'The doctors pronounced Slovik dead at 1008 hours. The firing squad did a right face and marched out of the yard behind the house. The Provost Marshal directed the enlisted witnesses to return to their room in the house, then ordered the officers to return. I gave the command "Right face! Forward march!" and we returned to the house where we disbanded.

'Outside in the courtyard, the record was being completed as the doctors determined the places where each bullet penetrated the body. Thereafter the Graves Registration detail took over and, after processing the remains, slipped the body into the customary mattress cover for burial.

'In the reception room, there were formal salutations as officers prepared to leave. There were few comments upon what had just been witnessed and Chaplains Smith and Langford tarried to speak to Chaplain Cummings while I departed in a jeep with Captain Bigelow, commander of the Corps MP Company.'

RESTRICTED

SPECIAL ORDERS)
)
NUMBER 17)

HEADQUARTERS 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO 28, U. S. ARMY, 28 January 1945
28TH - ROLL ON

EXTRACT

1. The following listed EM are detailed for duty as members of the firing squad to execute the sentence of death by shooting imposed by a General Court-Martial upon Private Eddie D Slovik 36896415 Co "G" 109th Inf. EM will report for duty to the Director of the Execution at the Office of the Provost Marshal, this hq, at 310830 Jan 1945, or such other time as specified by the Director of the Execution:

S Sgt	Albert H Bruns	36027946	Co "F", 109th Inf - IN COMMAND
Pvt	Aaron Morrison	35656274	Hq Co, 1st Bn, 109th Inf
Pvt	James K Baker	35132803	Co "A", 109th Inf
Pfc	Oscar R Kittle	33807832	Co "D", 109th Inf
Pfc	Earl J Williams	33366036	Co "B", 109th Inf
Pvt	John R James	35815616	Co "F", 109th Inf
Pvt	Clarence M Revlet	35815637	Co "F", 109th Inf
Pvt	Robert A Irons	37644124	Co "G", 109th Inf
Pvt	Charles E McDaniel	34936344	Co "G", 109th Inf
Pfc	Trinidad Sanchez	36266351	Hq Co, 3d Bn, 109th Inf
Pvt	Cass W Carper	36455522	Hq Co, 3d Bn, 109th Inf
Pvt	Frank Nawrocki	12182922	Hq Co, 3d Bn, 109th Inf
Pvt	Thomas E Keresey	31264843	Hq Co, 3d Bn, 109th Inf

** ** **

By command of Major General COTA:

HEADQUARTERS 28TH DIVISION
OFFICIAL
ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES

J. L. GIBNEY,
Colonel, GSC,
Chief of Staff.

P. M. KIENZLE,
Lt Colonel, AGD,
Adjutant General.

Distribution: Special

Above left: Through this door Private Slovik emerged for his execution. A suggestion that a white marker be pinned over his heart was declined by the senior medical officer, Major Robert E. Rougelot, as unnecessary seeing that the firing party were 'expert' riflemen hand-picked by Lieutenant Colonel James E. Rudder — the 109th's renowned commander. The result was an 18-inch group which, at twenty paces, would have disgraced even a rookie squad. According to the post-mortem description of the eleven hits (superimposed on Slovik in the picture *above*), our medical expert concludes that not one bullet hit in a place which would have caused instantaneous death. Two shots missed his body entirely hitting his left arm. (Note. Anatomical accuracy cannot be guaranteed by the transposition of the wounds, described in the PM, to a slouched, seated figure.)

In his quest for precise accuracy, Jean Paul Pallud spent an inordinate amount of time pinpointing the exact spot where Slovik was standing when shot; obtaining the plans and photographs reproduced here and making two visits to St. Marie.

As preparations were made for the first execution of an American soldier for desertion since the Civil War, his unit, the 109th Infantry Regiment, was engaged in the Battle of the Colmar Pocket in eastern France. On February 2, 1945, legendary D-Day commander, Lieutenant Colonel James E. Rudder, led his men on a victory parade before the Commanding General of the First French Army through Colmar and, when this photograph was taken, Eddie Slovik was dead and buried. Jim Rudder's message to the soldiers of the 109th clearly expressed his own feelings: 'Today I had the most regrettable experience I have had since the war began. I saw a former soldier of the 109th Infantry, Private Eddie D. Slovik, shot to death by musketry by soldiers of this regiment. I pray that this man's death will be a lesson to each of us who have any doubt at any time about the price that we must pay to win this war. The person that is not willing to fight and die, if need be, for his country has no right to life. According to record, this is the first time in eighty years of American history that any United States soldier has been shot to death by musketry for deserting his unit and his fellow men.'

Although the American authorities had gone to great lengths to keep the execution secret from the local population, we have discovered that there was a civilian witness. We asked our enthusiastic French sleuth and author Jean Paul Pallud (who had previously done excellent pieces of detective work for us — see After the Battle Nos. 25 and 26) if he would like to investigate the Slovik story for us and he visited St. Marie-aux-Mines in June 1980. His first, disappointing, discovery was that the house and garden used for the execution had been demolished in the mid-1960s in order to develop local council flats. Nevertheless, he tracked down a local photographer who had recorded pictures of the house as it was and Jean Paul has provided the comparison photographs of the same views today.

Then he traced a Madame Steiner who, in 1945, lived on the opposite side of the valley in a farm which overlooked the chateau courtyard. She told Jean Paul that by January 29, it had become common knowledge that the house had been requisitioned and, although the Americans had given no reason, it was obvious that something special was being planned as soon as the engineers began work in the garden. She said that her husband was fearful of the consequences if they were caught spying on the activities and, although he kept out of sight, Madame boldly watched the complete proceedings with her ten-year-old daughter.

On the morning of January 30 the snow-covered valley was silent and still. Then vehicles began arriving at the chateau and, just before 10.00 a.m., files of men began to march into the courtyard. Everything and everyone stood out in stark contrast to the white background and she clearly heard, although she did not understand, words of the commands which were carried to her in the silence. She remembered that the voice giving the orders seemed louder than the shots which followed. Then, while some men grouped around the figure tied to the post, vehicles began leaving on the far side of the house. About an hour later, she saw soldiers burning something outside the house. At the time she thought it was the body of the soldier who had been executed as it went on for such a long time, but it would now appear that the fire was consuming the stop butt, firing post and collapse board.

Private Slovik was first buried in the temporary US cemetery at Epinal, thirty-five miles away on the west bank of the Moselle River, and was one of ninety-six Americans executed in the European Theater (including Britain) for heinous crimes during World War II. These burials were scattered in war cemeteries all over the Continent, usually near the place of execution.

After the war, the US Quartermaster General of the Army asked the American Battle Monuments Commission if they had any space suitable to inter all ninety-six remains in one location. Therefore, in 1949, General of the Army George C. Marshall, the Commission's Chairman who had also been Chief of Staff during the war, together with other Commissioners, chose a plot of land adjacent to but outside the First World War cemetery at Oise-Aisne in France. The intention was not only to create a special 'dishonoured' plot, secure from the public eye, but also to ensure that no stigma, either actual, imagined, or implied, could become attached to the soldiers buried nearby who had died honourably in battle.

The war cemetery at Oise-Aisne contains the remains of 6,012 men in four plots, A, B, C and D, most of whom died fighting in the surrounding area in 1918. Plot E, with its ninety-six numbered markers, completely surrounded by a high wall and shielded by trees, is located beside the Superintendent's quarters on the opposite side of the road. Following the original directions laid down in 1949, publicity concerning the plot is severely restricted, public visitation is not allowed, and all enquiries are immediately directed to the Commission's European office at Garches where all appeals to visit the plot are refused.

We clearly felt that the story would not be complete without a picture of Plot E where Private Slovik lies buried under headstone 65 in Row 3 and so we applied to the American Battle Monuments Commission's HQ in Washington for permission to visit and take photographs. Colonel Ryan's reply was courteous but firm and he reiterated the ruling which has been in force for thirty years.

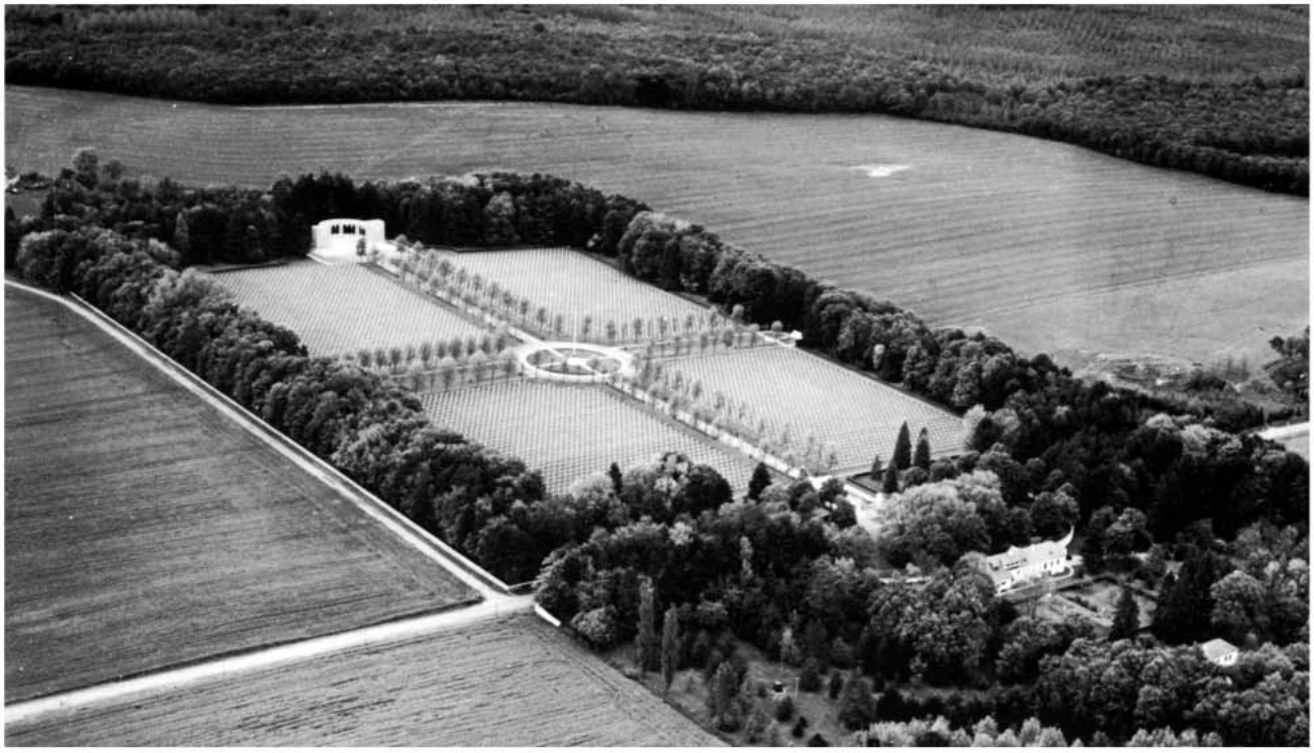
William Bradford Huie was, however, allowed to visit Plot E in 1953 during his work on his book 'The Execution of Private Slovik' published in 1954. Huie felt that there was an injustice in that only one American soldier had been singled out for execution while others had been released after the war following a period of imprisonment. He also felt that to make an example of Slovik at the end of January 1945 was too late to have any effect on the high rate of desertion which American forces had suffered in the Battle of the Bulge. Huie also undertook a personal crusade on behalf of Slovik's widow Antoinette who, he felt, should have received the GI insurance payment of $10,000 following General Cota's modification of that part of the sentence concerning the forfeiture of pay. With interest, Huie reckoned the US Government owed Mrs. Slovik $16,000 but, although he obtained the

RECEIPT FOR BODY

This is to certify that on 31 January 1945 the undersigned witnessed the execution by shooting of Private Eddie E. Slovik, 36896415, Company G, 109th Infantry, and received the dead body of the said Private Eddie E. Slovik from Major William Fellman II, Provost Marshal, 28th Infantry Division, at the scene of execution, St. Marie aux Mines, France, for burial.

James E. Rudder 1st Lt Inf
O-1313602
46th Q.M. G.R. Co.

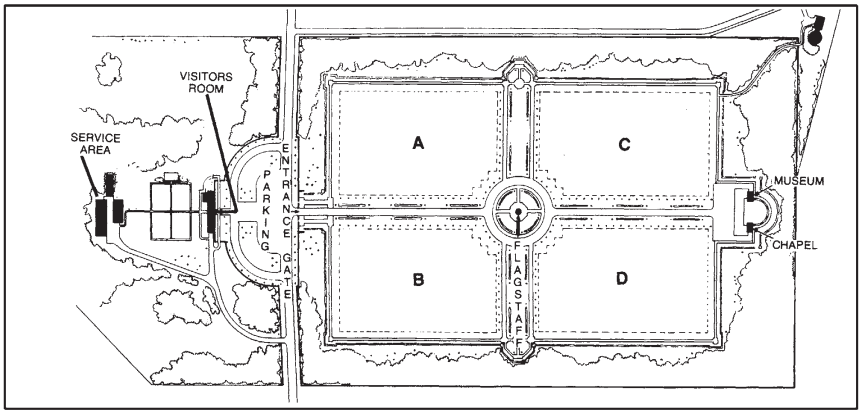
After the body was handed over to the 46th Quartermaster Company it was taken to the nearest temporary American cemetery, the one at Epinal, for burial.



All the American 'dishonoured' dead were concentrated at Oise-Aisne, seventy miles north-east of Paris. In 1918, Company G of the 109th, Slovik's Company, fought a bitter battle within yards of where the cemetery now lies — an amazing coincidence.

help of three Senators, they were told that their effort would be 'an affront to President Eisenhower . . . it would look like you are accusing the President of making a mistake when he ordered that cowardly deserter shot'. Likewise a proposal to make a film based on the book was deemed by the government not to be in the nation's interest and the White House sent an officer to the major studios in California to tell them so.

That action delayed a film about the Slovik story for twenty years — it appeared in America in 1974 and on British television in 1978 — by which time the amount Huie believed due to Mrs. Slovik had risen with interest to $70,000! A new President backed the claim but Antoinette Slovik (then living under an assumed name in Detroit) died on September 7, 1979 — just a few days before a Senate committee was due to consider the special legislation necessary to authorise the payment.



Above: **Official American Battle Monuments sketch of Oise-Aisne.** *Below:* **What the plan fails to show — the location of Plot E separated from the main cemetery by the D2.**

NORWEGIAN NORTHROP

BY BJORN OLSEN

The first order to be placed with the newly-founded Northrop aircraft company came from the Norwegian Government when, in March 1940, it ordered twenty-four Northrop N-3PB patrol bombers. These single-engined, high performance seaplanes were purchased for operations along the Norwegian coastline but, not long after the order had been placed, Norway was invaded and occupied by the Germans with the result that in June the Government crossed the North Sea to Britain.

With the need for these aircraft now greater than ever, the Norwegian Government in exile went ahead with the order and, in February and March 1941, all twenty-four N-3PBs, or Northrops as they were always called, were delivered to the Free Norwegian training establishment of 'Little Norway' in Toronto, Canada.

A little later, on April 25, 1941, the first Norwegian squadron of the Royal Air Force, No. 330 (N) Squadron, was formed. Operating from Iceland with RAF Coastal Command, the unit was equipped with Northrops and split into three flights: 'A' Flight based at Reykjavik, 'B' Flight in the north at Akureyri and 'C' Flight to the south at Budareyri. Conditions were raw — bad weather, intense cold, unprotected bases and uninsulated Nissen huts being just some of the hardships that had to be endured.

The first operational flight undertaken by No. 330 Squadron was on June 23, 1941, and from then on it was continuously in action. As the squadron was manned mainly by naval personnel, some of its members were experienced airmen from the pre-war Norwegian Naval Air Force, whereas there were others, such as the young volunteer Bredo Thurmann-Nielsen, who came fresh from training in Canada as pilots with often as little as twenty-five hours' solo flying time before they were made operational.

The Northrop normally had a crew of three — pilot, navigator, wireless operator/air gunner — who were dependent upon their single Wright Cyclone R-1820-G205A engine for hour after hour (if also upon the unimaginably hard and punishing work of the ground crews in servicing and maintaining the aircraft). Intended for coastal operations, the original design had been considerably modified at the drawing-board stage by a member of the Norwegian purchasing commission, Captain K. Ostby (a naval pilot and an aircraft builder himself), and the soundness of his modifications soon became apparent in Iceland when the Northrop had to patrol for up to six hours out over the Atlantic, often in atrocious weather.

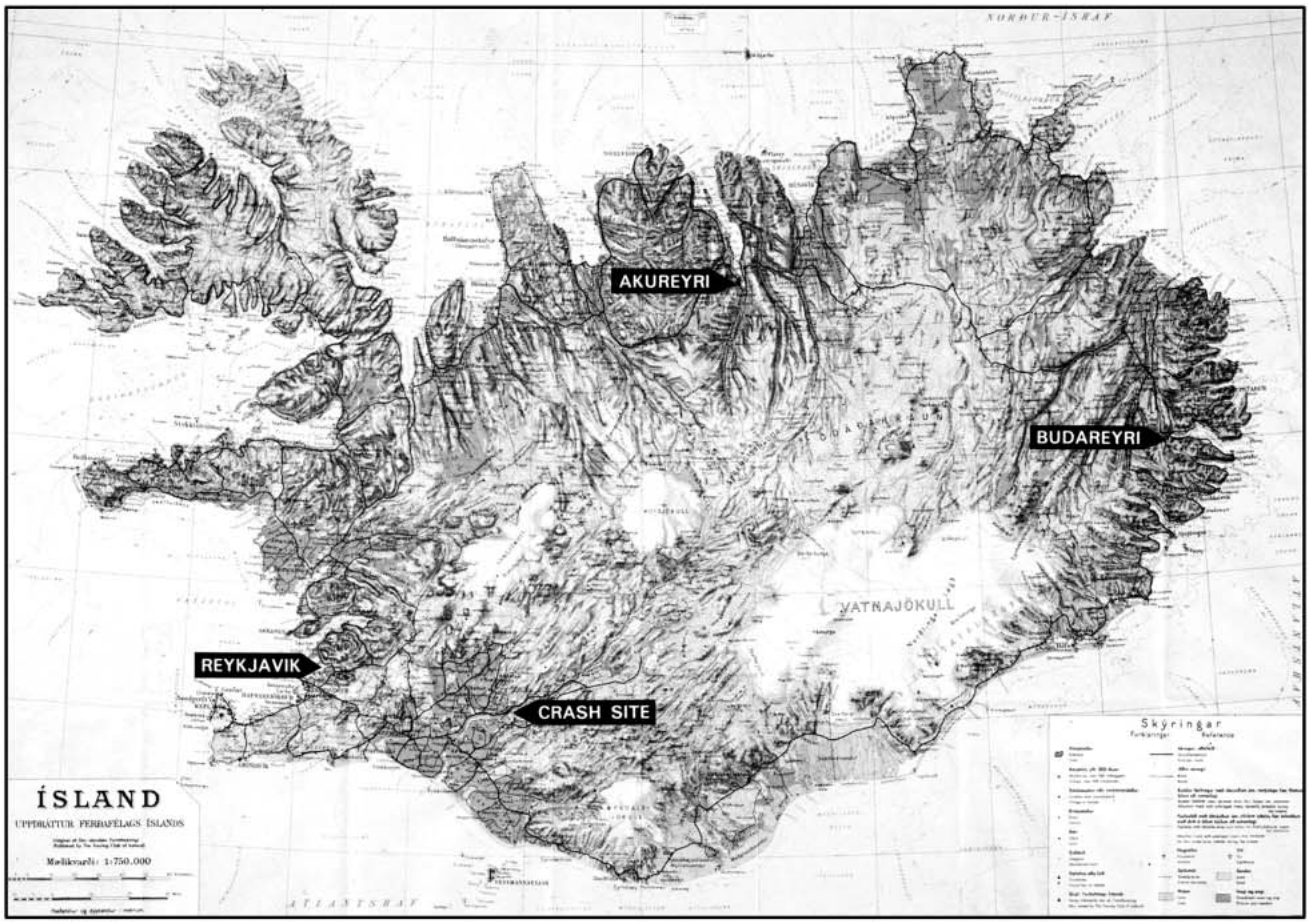
Inevitably, wear on the Northrops was considerable and, on December 1, 1942, 'A' and 'B' Flights ceased operations from Icelandic bases. Having also operated a number of Catalina IIIAs, No. 330 Squadron reformed at Oban in Scotland, receiving its first Sunderland II in February 1943; 'C' Flight continuing to fly Northrops from Akureyri until April 5, 1943.

Above: **John K. Northrop with the plans of the N-3PB, his new company's first production aircraft.** *Top:* **One of the aircraft with No. 330 (Norwegian) Squadron, attached to RAF Coastal Command, on patrol over Iceland (B. Thurmann-Nielsen).**

The stark operating conditions in Iceland are only too evident in this picture of Akureyri. The base at Budareyri was even more desolate (B. Olsen).

Convoy protection accounted for some 370 of the 1,041 operational sorties flown before the squadron moved to Scotland early in 1943. The total also included 246 anti-submarine sorties, 250 reconnaissance and eighteen ambulance missions, as well as army co-operation and other non-operational flights which could often turn out to be far from routine. Fifteen U-Boats were spotted, nine of them attacked and seven damaged. Eight Luftwaffe aircraft were also credited to the squadron as damaged (post-war research has shown that at least one of them never returned to base) including an FW 200 Condor which was attacked by Bredo Thurmann-Nielsen's crew on July 23, 1942 in his first air battle.

No. 330 Squadron lost ten aircraft and twenty-one men in action, many having disappeared without trace. Bredo Thurmann-Nielsen, who had joined the squadron as a petty officer, later being promoted to sub-lieutenant and lieutenant, recalls that they carried parachutes, 'but only to sit on. Nobody would have jumped. If we came down



One of 'A' Flight's Northrops at Corbett Camp Reykjavik in the autumn of 1941.

into the sea we would have survived for no more than three minutes, so why prolong the ordeal by jumping?'

Two of the Northrops were brought to Scotland, where one of them, GS-K, was used for fighter affiliation training. Both later came to Norway, only to end up as scrap. The others had been scrapped on Iceland when they were no longer operational. All, that is, except for one . . .

On April 21, 1943, Lieutenant Bulukin and Petty Officer Leif Rustad took off from Budareyri in aircraft No. 320. Their destination was Reykjavik, and for the Northrop it was to be the scrap-heap. En route they encountered bad weather which worsened until they could no longer continue but Lieutenant Bulukin managed to put down on the glacial River Thjorsa, where it sank in about six feet of water. The two crew members safely swam ashore and found their way to a remote Icelandic farm where they were taken care of.

Aircraft No. 320, GS-U, had already had an interesting history. After being delivered to the Norwegians on March 25, 1941, in addition to numerous operations of all kinds, it had taken part in both air combat and attacks on U-Boats. On August 28, 1942, flown by Petty Officer Hans Holdo, it took off from Reykjavik at 5.15 a.m. on an early morning patrol. Exactly one hundred minutes later Holdo spotted a U-Boat on the surface. He immediately attacked and dropped two depth-charges which fell so close that they almost lifted the U-Boat out of the water. Preparing for a second run-in, the Norwegians suddenly saw a British destroyer signalling to them for all it was worth. The signal read: 'Do not drop more depth-charges. The U-Boat has surrendered. Will take care of her.' The U-Boat, commanded by Kapitaenleutnant Rahmlow, was the *U-570* which had just surrendered to a Hudson of No. 269 Squadron RAF and British naval forces. Had GS-U's attack been successful, the Norwegians would probably not have been very popular with their colleagues in Coastal Command for some time!

Holdo continued his patrol and, at 8.06 a.m., found another U-Boat just beginning to dive. GS-U raked it with machine gun fire and also dropped its last depth-charge, without any visible results. Holdo continued to circle the area but the U-Boat did not reappear and at 9.30 a.m. he set course back to base. The weather deteriorated rapidly and it was

Above: **A 'B' Flight Northrop N-3PB at Akureyri. The pilot in the foreground is John Buer (B. Thurmann-Nielsen).** *Below:* **Patrolling over the North Atlantic in a single-engined aircraft in wartime was hardly a task to be envied. With its two-man crew, a Northrop prepares to take off.**

Above: **Down in the drink . . . which in this case meant the glacial River Thjorsa. This picture was taken some time after the crash (via Ragnarsson).** *Left:* **Lieutenant W. W. 'Sevi' Bulukin the pilot on GS-U's last flight photographed in March 1943, a month prior to the forced landing (W. Bulukin).** *Below:* **His crewman was Petty Officer Lief Rustad killed later in the war.**

midday before he was able to find land. By then, the petrol tanks had run dry, and he had to set down in an emergency landing on a fjord and have petrol brought up by another Northrop. By the time Holdo got back, at the end of an eventful day, it was 5.35 p.m.

An earlier episode, which may seem amusing in retrospect, happened in July 1942. The Americans had taken over Iceland's defence against air attack and trigger-happy gunners opened up on three unidentified aircraft. The 'enemy', however, turned out to be Norwegians in their Northrops; one of the aircraft being GS-U. Fortunately, although all three were hit, they each got down safely although all had to be repaired at Reykjavik.

Then, at 4.14 a.m. on August 25, 1942, GS-U left its base at Budareyri on an anti-submarine mission. The pilot was Petty Officer Soren Skaara, and his route took him over the waters off the eastern coast. At 5.30 a.m. Skaara spotted a U-Boat on the surface. He dived from 3,600 feet and, pulling out only ten feet above the U-Boat, raked it with his machine guns. Several hits were scored and only as the Northrop passed over its conning-tower did the U-Boat start to crash-dive. Skaara turned and dropped his three depth-charges right on the tower, which was still above the surface. After the U-Boat had completely submerged, large oil stains rose to the surface and GS-U continued to patrol the area for just over two hours. At 9.05 a.m. Skaara landed back at base and was later greatly disappointed when the British refused to credit him with a damaged U-Boat.

Early investigation of the wreck. Here Icelandic divers stand on the Northrop in the mid-1970s (via Ragnarsson).

It was Petty Officer Krafft who was at the controls of GS-U on September 6, 1942 when the aircraft took off from Budareyri at 5.10 a.m. Within fifteen minutes he had spotted an FW 200 Condor, jettisoned his depth-charges and closed in to attack. At 500 yards he opened fire but this was not returned and the Condor banked away, disappearing into cloud.

These then were some of the highlights in the operational life of GS-U before it sank into the River Thjorsa. There were a couple of salvage attempts a few years later by locals but these only served to damage the aircraft, after which the wreck was left alone for many years.

A few years ago, Icelander Ragnar J. Ragnarsson contacted me and told me about the Northrop in the Thjorsa. We both agreed that it should not be left lying there and I brought the matter to the attention of the Norwegian Defence Museum in Oslo. They became interested and wrote to Mr. Ragnarsson. Slowly plans for recovery began to take shape but the answer to one very important question remained as yet unknown: whether or not it would in fact be possible to recover the remains of GS-U.

At this stage the British sub-aqua diving expert Peter Cornish (who has been involved in several wreck recovery stories published in *After the Battle*) was brought in. He flew to Iceland, dived on the wreck, and produced an encouraging report which stated that although conditions were difficult, recovery was nevertheless possible. Our planning could therefore continue on a positive basis and the Northrop representative in Oslo came up with a most welcome surprise: as a Jubilee project, his company would assist in the recovery of the wreck and its subsequent restoration.

August 1979 and the recovery is underway. The wreck lay quite close to the shore (Northrop Inc.).

The project had by then become a fairly international one. The Norwegian and Icelandic aviation historical societies had been involved from the start and already considerable effort had been expended by the Norwegian Defence Museum, the British Sub-Aqua Club and the Icelandic Divers' Association. Now promises of help came in from the Norwegian Maritime Museum, the Icelandic Rescue Squadron, the San Diego Aerospace Museum and the US Navy, as well as interested individuals. About fifteen tons of equipment were loaned for the operation, including five large tents, an aerator, pumps, hoses, underwater TV and diving equipment; while two representatives came from Northrop bringing special tools.

On August 1, 1979 a Norwegian group flew to Iceland. The group included the now-retired Lieutenant Colonel W. W. Bulukin, who had put his aircraft down on the River Thjorsa thirty-six years previously with Leif Rustard (who was killed later in the war), two former No. 330 Squadron mechanics and some experienced divers. The Icelanders had already set up camp on the riverside near the wreck of GS-U and, after the Norwegians had settled in and the final preparations been made, the recovery itself began on the 4th.

The diving work was exceedingly difficult. Due to the presence of dissolved pumice and a strong current, visibility was virtually nil. The divers spent the first week clearing lava remains from the wreck and some of them tore their diving suits on sharp pieces of wreckage which they had not seen. However, the aircraft still proved to be firmly embedded in the mud, even after a large amount of silt was moved from around it.

The first piece of the Northrop to come loose was the tail section, which was recovered by the traditional method of lifting by air-filled bags. During the next few days many smaller items were recovered, among them one of the aircraft's floats and two of the wing-mounted machine guns. Nearby farmers brought souvenirs they had picked from the wreck in earlier years — propeller blades, an oil tank and parts from the engine.

There was a lot of public interest in what was going on, with both Press and TV giving continual coverage and, of course, there was always a crowd of interested spectators.

Nevertheless, despite twenty-five lifting bags giving a lifting power of three tons, the aircraft was still firmly stuck in the mud, and help had to be enlisted from a nearby power

No wonder the Northrop company were just a little taken aback when they saw the goods for restoration. It certainly did not look much like an aircraft (Northrop Inc.).

company who offered a bulldozer, two trucks and a crane. Tons of pumice were brought in and dumped to form a road out to the aircraft before the 30-ton crane could be put in position. Four strong steel cables were fastened to beams under the Northrop's centre section and, as they started to pull, the fuselage began to move and within a few minutes the wreckage broke the surface. After eleven days' hard work the divers could finally see what they had been working on.

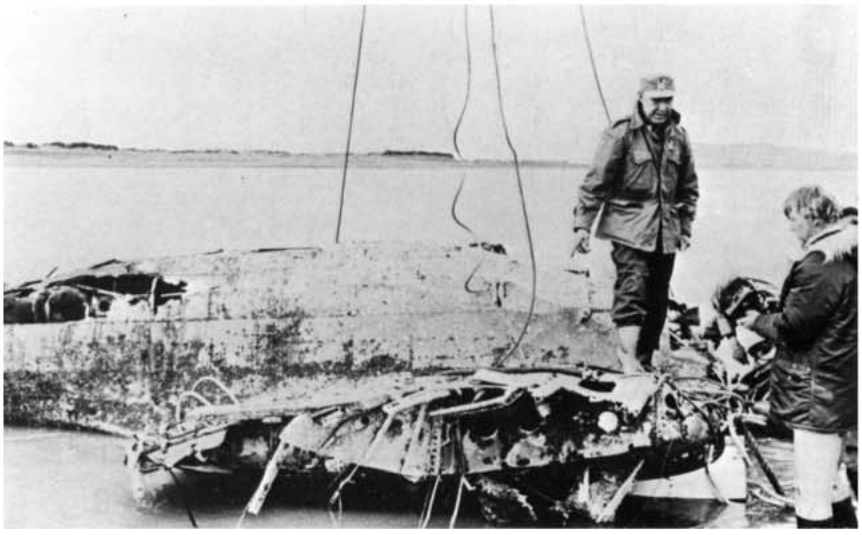
Mud and silt streamed from the wreck and soon the code letter U and the Norwegian colours could be seen on the port wing, with machine guns and belts of ammunition protruding from the corroded wing panels. Then, to the cheers of the recovery team and the spectators, Lieutenant Colonel Bulukin jumped back into the cockpit which he had abandoned in the spring of 1943.

Like many such projects, this recovery had been carried out by volunteers interested in historic aircraft and diving. Most had given up their summer holidays to help. All equipment had been loaned free and the enthusiasm of the locals had been almost unbelievable which was a great encouragement and inspiration for the other members of the recovery team.

Four months later the wreck was flown to the Northrop Corporation plant at Hawthorne, California by a Royal Norwegian Air Force C-130 Hercules. The Americans were a bit taken aback by what they saw. They had expected a wreck, but this heap of twisted metal . . . ?

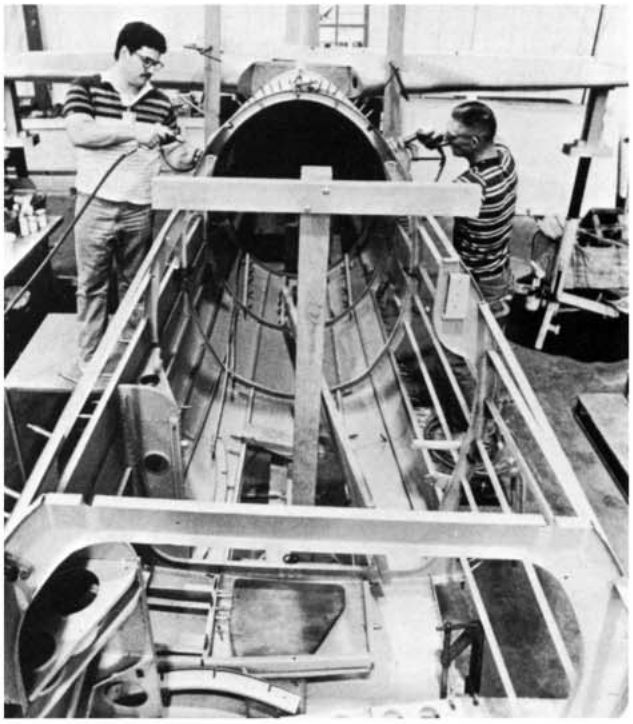
The Americans took up the challenge. More than 300 volunteers — current and retired Northrop employees and their families as well as aviation enthusiasts — gave up evenings and weekends to work on the N-3PB.

Restoration involved a range of complicated tasks since much of the aircraft was missing and other parts were too damaged or corroded to be used. Computer-aided graphics produced drawings of some of the missing parts, and original drawings for other parts were discovered one day in a dusty archive. For the rest, those working on the aircraft had to make do with old photos or parts from the opposite side of the Northrop to guide them. Old parts were disassembled, restored and reassembled again and new parts were fabricated to replace the missing. To begin with, there were no blueprints either, and



Colonel Bulukin examines the cockpit he left in April 1943 (Baldur Sveinsson).

Above: **Over 300 Northrop employees volunteered to work on the restoration of GS-U.**
Below: **The tailplane and fuselage begin to take shape (Northrop Inc.).**



A unique comparison. *Above:* Construction of the first N-3PB at the new Northrop factory at Hawthorne, California. *Below:* Forty years later, nine of the company's employees who worked on the original aircraft inspect the restoration project in the same plant.

these had to be made in the same way from whatever was available.

The leader of the restoration team was Darrell McNeal, for whom the project was a nostalgic one as, like fourteen other members of the team, he had worked on the original batch of N-3PBs nearly forty years earlier. Describing how he felt, seeing the N-3PB come back to life after all this time, Mr. McNeal said: 'At first it was a pile of pieces but, as it began to take shape and look like the aircraft, I could not look at it without thinking of all the people with whom I worked on those first N-3PBs. We were working under wartime pressure then. This was a period of great patriotism and dedication. I remember how anxious we were to hear how our planes had done in combat.

'It is easy to feel that way during a war', he added, 'but as the restoration work proceeded, I found the same enthusiasm for the N-3PB now that we had then. Although people have changed, the spirit that motivated us then is still with us today.'

In all, the restoration of GS-U took more than 150,000 volunteer hours, and the date set for its completion — November 10, 1980 — was the 85th birthday of the company's founder, Mr. John Knudsen Northrop. In the summer, when it became clear that this target would be achieved, invitations were sent to organisations, societies and individuals who had been involved in the preparations, recovery or restoration — and, of course, veterans from No. 330 Squadron.

All those who went to California to witness the historic event — whether flown over by a Royal Norwegian Air Force Hercules or having travelled at considerable personal expense — were met with the utmost kindness by the Northrop people who really went out of their way to make sure that everyone enjoyed themselves.

When the big day arrived on November 10, a large tent had been erected at the Northrop Corporation. Inside, there were platforms for TV and film photographers, chairs for the hundreds of invited guests, a speaker's platform — and a curtain which hid what we all had come to see, the only surviving Northrop N-3PB. Next to the curtain was a display of photographs and parts from GS-U. A couple of the parts were in the condition they had been in when pulled out of the river; others, among them the instrument panels, had been restored and looked brand new. The flags of Britain, the United States, Iceland and Norway hung together — signifying both the wartime link and the four countries' involvement in the project.

The last major airframe component — the floats — are fitted to the airframe.

After a few words of welcome, the chairman of Northrop asked two of the leaders of the restoration team to help him unveil the aircraft. A band played, cameras clicked and whirred as the silvery curtain shimmered slightly and then dropped to the floor to the build-up of a drum roll. To thunderous applause and gasps of surprise and delight, the falling curtain revealed GS-U, looking sparkling new in RAF colours with the Norwegian flag proudly painted below the cockpit. Perhaps less surprisingly, many veterans' eyes brimmed unashamedly with tears as the memories came flooding back, and Lieutenant Colonel Bulukin probably summed up the feelings of most of them: 'It's so beautiful. I wish I could fly it again'.

During the proceedings that followed, thanks were expressed to the Northrop Corporation for all its generous help, and presentations were made in token of appreciation to the company and for Mr. Northrop himself. He, unfortunately, was ill and could not be present, but his son, Mr. John Northrop Jr., assured everyone that his father was very much with us in spirit and that he had been especially moved at receiving a lengthy greeting from His Majesty King Olav V of Norway on this, his birthday.

Then, at only a few hours' notice, Brigadier General Bredo Thurmann-Nielsen, DFC, as one of the most experienced N-3PB pilots and with many hours on GS-U itself, gave a most interesting lecture on operations with the Northrop.

The main ceremony over, television and newspaper interviews began in front of the aircraft, where Lieutenant Colonel Bulukin was naturally much sought-after among the other veterans who were asked for their recollections and impressions.

Some interior restoration still remains but this will be completed soon. Plans after that are a bit uncertain, although there is nothing uncertain about GS-U's future destination — the Norwegian Air Force Museum which is to be opened at Gardermoen Air Base, north of Oslo. Prior to that GS-U may be displayed for a short time in the United States, and possibly in Iceland, but, within a year at the most, it will come home to Norway.

Inauguration day. Northrop employees and their families examining GS-U.

THE BELGIAN TANK MUSEUM

BY GEORGES MAZY

The character of the Belgian Army Royal Museum in Brussels has remained unchanged since it was first opened in 1922 and, since that time, has been predominantly of interest to students of the First World War.

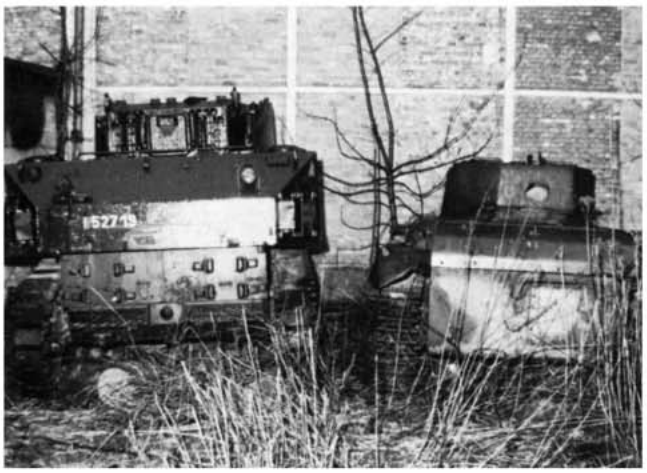
In 1970, the Musee Royal de l'Armee opened its Air and Space gallery in its building on the Esplanade du Cinquantenaire. To make room for the new exhibits, several World War II-vintage AFVs and vehicles were hurriedly removed to 'La Cour Carree' — a fifty-metre hollow square in the middle of the museum open to the sky. Shut off from the rest of the building the exhibits were left to rust and rot away and were more or less forgotten. The only time the square was opened was when a dumping ground was needed for rubble for the construction of the new Brussels underground railway system. Nature was left to take its course and when the Flemish television company wanted a location to double for bombed-out Berlin, they found there a ready-made setting.

For some years, a young Belgian enthusiast, Guy Van de Casteele, spent much of his free time in the photographic section of the museum where he helped to classify pictures from the Second World War. The mystery of the closed doors to 'La Cour Carree', coupled with the rumours of hidden war material somewhere in the museum, aroused his curiosity and, in 1979, he eventually obtained the correct keys. As the door swung open, he was confronted by a lunar landscape surrounded by rusting vehicles and guns. A quick inspection revealed a Morris light reconnaissance car, an Otter, an Opel Blitz, a Loyd carrier, a rare Chenillette Renault, a Firefly, anti-tank weapons including a German Pak 40 and three Russian guns. The whole area was overgrown and a Locust airborne tank and a Stuart had trees growing through their tracks. A Humber reconnaissance car had been left with its turret open to the elements and, as a result, the floor, rusted paper thin, collapsed as soon as Guy stood on it.

He decided there and then that something must be done to save the material that the official museum had more or less written off. In May 1979 Guy teamed up with another AFV enthusiast Georges Mazy and together they obtained permission from the rather incredulous museum authorities to begin work restoring the material. What followed shows just what can be done by voluntary dedication and effort.

Within a short while, a team of 150

Above: **For ten years, La Cour Caree in the centre of the Musee Royal de l'Armee was used as a convenient dumping ground for unwanted vehicles and even rubble from the construction of the Brussels underground railway! Shut off from the rest of the museum, this picture was taken shortly after Guy van de Casteele and Georges Mazy got the restoration project underway.** *Below:* **The incredible transformation carried out within the space of a few months.**



Left: **January 1979.** *Right:* **Within three months, the Stuart and Locust were undergoing restoration in the Air and Space Museum.**

youngsters, all madly interested in the Second World War and willing to devote their spare time to what they felt was a worthwhile cause, was brought together. All mainly aged fifteen to twenty, they were formed into working parties each with a specific project or vehicle. This helped to identify effort with a particular exhibit and made continuity of work much easier.

Already Guy's ambitious dream for a Belgian tank museum had taken shape but it was one in which the authorities wanted to see such a display as a separate entity within the museum proper. The group's dedicated work had already been recognised in the Ministry of Defence and Army Commands which had promised additional vehicles and tanks. Other derelict specimens were located on training grounds and firing ranges, and with the army providing transportation and some spare parts, the small nucleus of the Tank Museum — 'Les Blindes' — grew into a total of fifty plus vehicles — all within a few months although only thirty or so are on display at the moment.

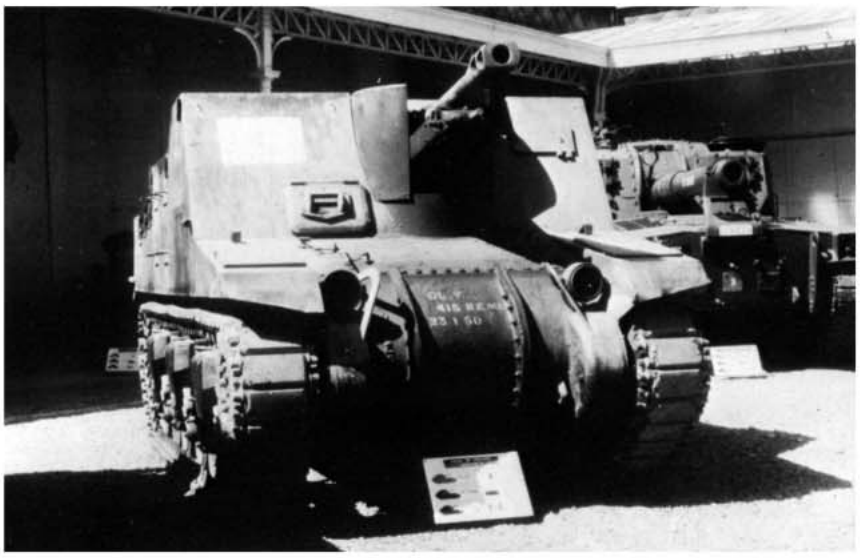
The group were told that no exhibition space could be provided in the main building but, not to be outdone, they asked for permission to use 'La Cour Carree' itself. When this was granted, trees were chopped down, weeds and bushes cleared and rocks and earth carted away. To anyone seeing the square today with its pink gravel and cobbled surround, the transformation, especially in so short a period of time, seems impossible. This is even more incredible when one appreciates that the whole programme has been carried out without any official budget. The founder members, without any legal right to the end product, have dipped into their own pockets to a considerable extent. They were also able to find supporters in the Army and the Ministry of Defence, the state service of public services, and in many private firms that contributed by providing, not money, but manpower for specific jobs and gave access to second-hand materials that were re-used with imagination.

On May 9, 1980, the collection was opened by a representative of the Minister of Defence in the presence of a large number of personalities, including many generals of the Belgian Army and various military attaches in Brussels. Amongst them was Lieutenant-General Dewandre (now retired and one of the few Belgian soldiers to have been decorated by Montgomery) who has followed and guided the project's progress with close interest and determination. When in charge of Belgian Army Logistics, General Dewandre had managed to preserve examples of some of the Army's post-war tanks and vehicles. He even convinced a German scrap dealer who had just bought the last self-propelled howitzers used by the Belgians to leave one behind.

Most of the AFVs are on show today but only a few of the softskin vehicles as there is no space to display these at present. Many valuable pieces are kept in reserve for the future, such as a Scammel, Diamond T and various Dodges. Friendly countries have also shown interest in the unique combination of a state museum with teams of enthusiastic youngsters and have donated other exhibits. A German Hetzer/G13 provided by the Swiss has recently arrived, an M/43 assault gun is on its way from Sweden and others are expected in the near future.

Centre: **The Otter light reconnaissance car before work had begun on its restoration. This is one of the 1,761 vehicles of the type produced.** *Above:* **By October 1979 it was at the half-way stage with an anti-rust primer coat.**

Left: Derived from the Ironside, the MkIII Humber light recce car is a rare exhibit as Georges Mazy does not believe any others have been preserved. Unfortunately the inside is very poor as the turret hatch had been left open for more than ten years. This particular vehicle was used for radio training by the Belgian Army in the 1950s. *Right:* The M10 tank destroyer, after modification by the British, was renamed the Achilles. This example is displayed exactly as found in a Belgian wood.



Variations of the Sherman. *Above:* The Canadian Sexton with 25pdr gun. *Right:* This Priest was in use in Belgium until the early 1960s. A Patton stands in the background.

Support for the embryo museum from abroad has been very encouraging. This is the Hetzer . . . a generous gift from the Swiss Army.